

## **CABINET MEMBER DELEGATED DECISION 01 DECEMBER 2021**

**Report title:** Household Support Fund framework and approach

**Wards:** All

**Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance: Councillor Andy Wilson

**Report Authorised by:** Andrew Eyres: Strategic Director Integrated Health and Care

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### **REPORT SUMMARY**

On 6 October the Department for Work and Pensions announced that a new Household Support Fund (HSF) grant will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this winter. This new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and Lambeth has been awarded £2.7m.

The purpose of the grant is to provide support to households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency) this winter as the economy recovers.

At least 50% of the total funding has to be allocated to support households with children and the remainder to other households (including individuals).

This paper sets out the framework and approach for the allocation of the Household Support fund.

There was no formal approval in place for the spend between 06 October and 01 December, therefore the Cabinet Member is asked to note spend made during this period.

### **FINANCE SUMMARY**

The Council has been allocated £2.7m of grant funding from the Department of Work and Pensions for household support in 20/21. This report recommends the use of the funding for various activities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To note the spend from 06 October 2021 to 01 December 2021 for an amount of £331,295.
2. To agree the framework set out in paragraph 2.1 and approach detailed in the remainder of the report for distribution of £2,389,342 of grant funding for the Household Support Fund from 01 December 2021 to 31 March 2022.

## 1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 The DWP created a Winter Grant Scheme grant in December 2020 to support families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals where Lambeth was awarded funds for spend until mid-April 2021. Following this additional DWP funding with similar terms named the Covid Local Grant Support fund was provided for spend between April and September 2021.
- 1.2 On 6 October 2021 the Department for Work and Pensions announced a new Household Support Fund (HSF) grant for top-tier councils in England to support those most in need this winter during the final stages of economic recovery. Lambeth's allocation is £2.7m. The funding covers the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 1.3 The expectation is that the funding should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. 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.
- 1.4 At least 50% of the funding is for *vulnerable households with children*. The remainder of the funding (up to 50%) is available for *vulnerable households without children (including individuals)*.

## 2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 2.1 It is proposed the total funding is allocated as follows:

	Planned activities	Fund criteria/areas	Anticipated spend (£)
<b>Households with Children</b>	Free School Meal Holiday Provision	Support for Food Support for Energy and Water	1,710,000
<b>Households with Children</b>	Families with no recourse to public funds over the winter.	Support for Food Support for Energy and Water	12,000
<b>Other Households</b>	Emergency Support Scheme ESS contingency	Support for Food Support for Energy and Water Support for essentials linked to energy and water Support for emergency housing costs Other spend	484,000 182,000
<b>Other Households</b>	Reducing household bills – Energy Awareness & vulnerability check	Support for essentials linked to energy and water	50,000
<b>Other Households</b>	Direct awards to surplus food distribution/Foodbank	Support for Food	141,000
<b>Other Households</b>	Single individuals with no recourse to public funds and care and support needs over the winter.	Support for Food Support for Energy and Water	5,700
<b>Other Households</b>	Communications/overheads	Scheme administration	136,300
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2,720,637</b>

- 2.2 21,000 households in the borough are known to already be in fuel poverty with that number increasing.
- 2.3 Those most likely to be in receipt of benefits, affected by furlough or to have a household income below £15,000 are concentrated in Coldharbour, Tulse Hill and Stockwell wards.
- 2.4 As part of a London wide picture, over 2.3 million Londoners live below the poverty line and 33% of adults have skipped meals to save money so their children can eat. With one in six Londoners, including three in ten children, being in persistent poverty.

### **Households with Children:**

#### **Free School Meal Holiday Provision: £1,710,000**

- 2.5 Regards funding for *households with children* it is proposed this is allocated towards food/bill vouchers for families with children in receipt of free school meals.
- 2.6 Lambeth has agreed it's criteria for eligibility for these vouchers will be school aged children entitled to free school meals, children who are eligible for 2-year-old pupil place and are classified as vulnerable and 3 and 4year olds entitled to early years Pupil Premium.
- 2.7 Based on an FSM pupil population of 11,704 and Early Years pupils of 2,542 this award amounts to £1.71m: 63%. There is an expectation that the projection on FSM numbers in schools could increase during the remainder of the school year due to the increase in families becoming eligible.
- 2.8 The contribution for each eligible family will amount to £20 per child for each week of the holiday period towards food and energy bills.
  - a. October half term –1 week
  - b. Christmas Break – 2 weeks
  - c. February half term – 1 week
  - d. Easter holiday – 2 weeks

### **Other Households:**

#### **Emergency Support Scheme (£484,000)**

- 2.9 The council's existing emergency support scheme will be the main means of distributing the core support for food, energy and water and other spend received through the Household Support Fund. It is an existing scheme so set-up costs are limited.
- 2.10 The following changes to the existing scheme will be implemented to enable compliance with the Fund guidance and ensure broader range of residents are eligible for support:
  - Removal of requirement for ESS applicants to be on benefits to qualify for Food / Fuel assistance
  - Removal of six-month reapplication rule and not have exclusions based on previous application
  - Addition of qualification criteria: 'household income is less than £30k p/a'
  - Implementation of payment of standardised amounts (amounts TBC) for fuel/food based on household and accommodation type

- 2.11 Additional resourcing will be required in the ESS team to manage increased demand. A significant communications campaign (see paragraph 2.27 below) will also be required to increase awareness of the fund. These costs will be met through funding set aside for scheme administration rather than through the ESS allocation.
- 2.12 Demographic data of existing ESS applicants shows that ESS is currently accessed by the most deprived areas and cohorts of the borough.
- 2.13 Payments for fuel via the ESS will be made through Paypoint (key or cash vouchers).

#### **Emergency Support Scheme Contingency (£182,000)**

- 2.14 There are a considerable amount of unknowns in relation to level of demand for the funding through the ESS. It is proposed that a contingency of £182k is retained to allow for the ESS to be 'topped-up' should demand be higher than expected.
- 2.15 The ESS run-rate (i.e. how much of the additional funding is being spent) will be monitored on a weekly basis to ensure that there is sufficient funding available to meet demand and to determine whether or not any changes are required (e.g. criteria, communications) to increase or decrease demand or to increase or decrease fund levels.
- 2.16 Should the run-rate be lower than expected and options for increasing demand exhausted a set of options will be retained to ensure that the funding reaches those most vulnerable in the borough.

#### **Reducing household bills – Energy Awareness & vulnerability check (£50,000)**

- 2.17 Increased energy costs will be an ongoing issue for vulnerable residents over the winter months. To support households to reduce their fuel bills on an ongoing basis and reduce the amount of repeat applications for fuel assistance, it is proposed that £50,000 of funding be allocated to extend the current delivery of the Groundwork London Green Doctor programme in Lambeth to support 400 households experiencing fuel poverty (200 remote, 200 in-person visits).
- 2.18 Analysis pre-Covid demonstrated that the Green Doctor service saved households on average more than the amount required to take them out of fuel poverty (according to ONS definition), and that the benefits of learning from the scheme (e.g. how to switch tariff/understand your bill, how to manage your household energy including thermostat/impact of 30degree washes/heating what you need, small measures fitted, water use advice) last for years. The service is also able to administer fuel vouchers and undertake a health triage to assess vulnerability, including onwards referrals into other services.
- 2.19 The proposed scheme is an expansion of the existing offer for Lambeth residents available through the [South London Healthy Homes](#) scheme, so would require minimal set up. Residents accessing the Emergency Support scheme for fuel vouchers would be encouraged to take up a Green Doctor appointment and also receive information on the more extensive sustainability support available for low-income households through the Lambeth Green Homes Grant.

#### **Direct awards to surplus food distribution (Healthy Living Platform)/Trussell Trust foodbanks (£141,000)**

- 2.20 The council has an existing arrangement with Healthy Living Platform (HLP) to operate a surplus food co-ordination and distribution service providing surplus food to a range of community organisations across the borough. The Trussell Trust (TT) operate five foodbanks in the borough

distributing food parcels to residents referred into the service from a single distribution hub. Both work closely with voluntary and community sector groups across the borough that work with our most vulnerable residents.

- 2.21 This funding will be split 50/50 and provided to HLP/TT to enable them to increase the scale of their operations during the Winter period to meet expected increase in food poverty during the period.

### **Residents with no recourse to public funds (£17,700)**

- 2.22 The council's No Recourse to Public Funds team works with vulnerable families and individuals with care and support needs. The grant terms and conditions state that the council will be eligible to provide a basic safety net to people, regardless of immigration status, where there is a community care need or a risk to a child's wellbeing.
- 2.23 The allocated funding equates to a food and fuel allowance of £50 per month for families with children and £25 per month for single individuals with community care needs or serious health concerns.
- 2.24 This cohort is often hard to reach and unlikely to apply for funding when needed. By providing the funding directly to the No Recourse to Public Funds team for allocation, Lambeth can ensure known residents who fit the grant criteria and would otherwise be at risk this winter are given support for food and fuel.

### **Communications (£50,000)**

- 2.25 A communications campaign will be required to increase awareness of the scheme throughout its operation (until March 2022). Any campaign will need to be flexible to enable dialling-up (moving from targeted to universal) or down (vice versa) activity to enable distribution of the fund at a suitable rate. The campaign will, dependent on the run-rate, be required to focus on:
- Specific groups of residents (i.e. those the council is able to identify through its existing systems as likely to be significantly impacted by reduction in Universal Credit, increased fuel prices and/or other winter pressures)
  - Frontline staff/high resident contact services – incl. Health (Primary Care), Housing, Adults, Children's, Economic Inclusion (identifying, signposting and supporting vulnerable residents through the ESS process)
  - Voluntary and community sector / advice agencies (identifying, signposting and supporting vulnerable residents through the ESS process)
  - All residents (increase awareness)
- 2.26 It is proposed that this campaign form part of wider Public Health-led 'winter resilience campaign'. Specific steps are likely to be required to enable the removal of stigma for residents of accessing ESS/foodbank support and the proactive identification of those that might require additional support this winter.
- 2.27 It is proposed that for the duration of the winter period the 'Emergency Support Scheme' is renamed 'Household Support Scheme'.

### **Overheads (£83,300)**

- 2.28 Expected overheads to manage the scheme include requirements for additional staffing to manage increased demand in the ESS and changes to the ESS system (third-party). These costs are not expected to exceed £50,000. An additional £33,000 will be retained as an overhead contingency for any unexpected overheads arising across the whole fund (including the Free School Meals element). This will be released back into the main fund should it not be required.
- 2.29 Total scheme administration costs (communications and overheads) equal approximately 5% of the fund total.

### Approaches considered but not carried forward

- 2.30 Direct awards to smaller VCS groups providing food and/or fuel support to vulnerable residents. This approach was not taken forward as it was felt that the set-up and management costs of such a scheme/organisation (in the absence of an existing scheme/organisation) would exceed the benefit and the speed of deployment of such an approach would not be adequate to meet the expected needs of residents. To mitigate this it is proposed that the communications campaign specifically target VCS organisations in the borough to make them aware of the relaxed criteria in the ESS and to support vulnerable residents to apply to that scheme.
- 2.31 Direct support to discretionary or other housing pots. It was felt that there was adequate funding already in the discretionary housing pot and that it would be more efficient to make frontline housing workers aware of the relaxed criteria in the ESS and to encourage them to support vulnerable residents to apply to that scheme.

## 3. FINANCE

- 3.1 Fuel payments made through the ESS will be made through paypoint. This will require an increase to existing waiver for Paypoint.

### Allocation: Households with Children

- 3.2 At least 63% of the total £2.7m funding, which equates to a minimum of £1.71m will be ring-fenced to support households with children. Below is estimate based on current numbers which could increase – there is a contingency of approx. 500 pupil increase which will be finalised in November. The total based on current numbers is £1.71m.

	Estimated pupil numbers Early Years based on Summer21 Census to be updated in Oct 21	EY Costs	Estimated Pupil Numbers Schools based on Jan 21 census to be updated in Oct 21	Schools Cost	Total cost at £20pw Voucher per pupil
Half term Oct 2021 (1 week)	2,542	50,840	11,704	234,080	£ 284,920
Christmas 2021 (2 weeks)	2,542	101,680	11,704	468,160	£569,840
Half term Feb 2022 (1 Week)	2,542	50,840	11,704	234,080	£284,920
Easter 2022 (2 Week )	2,542	101,680	11,704	468,160	£ 569,840
		<b>£305,040</b>		<b>£1,404,480</b>	<b>£1,709,520</b>

#### 4. LEGAL AND DEMOCRACY

- 4.1 There are no specific legal comments on this report save as to say that the recommendations and rationale for the distribution and allocation of the funding to vulnerable households with children are within the scope of the Household Support Fund (HSF) grant scheme.
- 4.2 This proposed key decision was entered in the Forward Plan on 15 November 2021 and so the necessary 28 clear days' notice has not been given. The Statement of Urgency notice has been published alongside this report and the Monitoring Officer has agreed both that the decision in question is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. This decision is therefore not subject to five clear days' pre-notification and is not subject to the call-in process.

#### 5. CONSULTATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

- 5.1 A Household Support Fund working group was established and has met weekly since the announcement of this fund. It is chaired by Associate Director COVID-19 Response with cross-council membership including children's services representatives: Director Education and Learning, Schools & Educational Improvement Adviser, Assistant Director, Integrated Children's Commissioning and Group Manager, Children's Finance. The group jointly agreed the allocation of this fund for 'households with children' and 'other households'.
- 5.2 Conversations on the allocation of the funding have been held in the regular Food VCS roundtable meetings.

#### 6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The main risks that impede on the successful delivery of this fund are:

**Table 1 – Risk Register:**

Item	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Control Measures
1	Pressure on school admin resource to distribute food/energy bill vouchers ahead of Christmas break	2	4	8	To work collaboratively with Education team to ensure schools are notified asap
2	Low-income households with children who are not in receipt of FSM are not supported by this fund	4	2	8	Ensure strong communications campaign so these families are aware of and can access 'other households' fund
3	That the run-rate on the ESS is too great (exceeding available funding) or too low	4	4	16	Weekly monitoring of ESS run-rate Flexibility within comms and engagement and ESS form to dial-up or down as appropriate
4	Time taken to implement changes to ESS application form causes delay to roll-out of revised scheme	2	4	8	Awaiting confirmation of lead-time Preparation of Plan B options

#### Key

<b>Likelihood</b>	Very Likely = 4	Likely = 3	Unlikely = 2	Very Unlikely = 1
<b>Impact</b>	Major = 8	Serious = 4	Significant = 2	Minor = 1

## 7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 All protected characteristic groups within our school aged children attending provision, children who are eligible for 2 year old pupil place and are classified as vulnerable and 3 and -year4year olds entitled to early years Pupil Premium will be positively impacted by this fund.
- 7.2 An EIA for the children's allocation is attached and this is currently being updated to include the full grant. The spending of this grant will positively impact protected characteristic groups. The applicants to the current ESS include residents from the demographics that reflect deprivation in the borough. Lambeth's spending of this grant will include targeting demographics of vulnerable residents.

## 8. COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 8.1 There are no community safety implications.

## 9. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

### Environmental

- 9.1 Any committed spend of this fund will refer to the corporate carbon reduction plan in line with the council's ambition to become a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030.

### Health

- 9.2 The alleviation of food poverty is recognised is recognised in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

### Corporate Parenting

- 9.3 There is no direct impact on the Council's corporate parenting duties and responsibilities as a result of this decision.

### Staffing and accommodation

- 9.4 Not applicable.

### Responsible Procurement

- 9.5 Not applicable.

## 10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 10.1 The table below details the stages and deadlines for implementing the recommendations

Activity	Proposed Date
Date published on Forward Plan	15.11.21
Publication on Decisions online	01.12.21
Officer or Cabinet Member Decision	01.12.21
End of Call-in Period (key decisions only)	N/A Special urgency to be used

## AUDIT TRAIL

Name and Position/Title	Lambeth Directorate	Date Sent	Date Received	Comments in paragraph:
Councillor Andy Wilson	Cabinet Member for Finance	27.10.21	4.11.21	
Councillor Claire Holland	Leader	11.11.21	26.11.21	
Councillor Donatus Anyanwu	Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector and Leisure	11.11.21	23.11.21	
Councillor Liz Atkins	Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee	30.11.21	30.11.21	
Andrew Eyres, Strategic Director	Integrated Health and Care	11.11.21	24.11.21	
Fiona Connolly Executive Director	Adults and Health	11.11.21	24.11.21	
Fiona McDermott Strategic Director	Finance and Investment	11.11.21	24.11.21	
Ruth Hutt, Director, Public Health	Adults and Health	11.11.21	18.11.21	
Pete Hesketh, Finance	Finance and Property	18.11.21	18.11.21	Finance summary
Dominique Johnston-Franklin, Finance	Finance and Property	17.11.21	23.11.21	Finance summary
Andrew Pavlou, Legal Services	Legal and Governance	18.11.21	18.11.21	4.1
Jacqueline Pennycook, Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	11.11.21	18.11.21	
Maria Burton, Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	26.11.21	26.11.21	

## REPORT HISTORY

<b>Original discussion with Cabinet Member</b>	27.10.21
<b>Report deadline</b>	N/A
<b>Date final report sent</b>	N/A
<b>Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?</b>	No
<b>Key decision report</b>	Yes
<b>Date first appeared on forward plan</b>	15.11.21 – special urgency to be used
<b>Key decision reasons</b>	Expenditure, income or savings in excess of £500,000
<b>Background information</b>	<a href="#">Household support fund: guidance for councils</a>
<b>Appendices</b>	None

**APPROVAL BY CABINET MEMBER OR OFFICER IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

**I confirm I have consulted Finance, Legal, Democratic Services and the Procurement Board, and taken account of their advice and comments in completing the report for approval:**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Post:** Tom Barrett, AD Covid Response

**I confirm I have consulted the relevant Cabinet Members, including the Leader of the Council (if required), and approve the above recommendations:**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Post:** Councillor Andy Wilson  
Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance

**Any declarations of interest (or exemptions granted):** None

**Any conflicts of interest:** None

**Any dispensations:** None