

Statement of grant usage, Household Support Fund (4). April 2023 to March 2024



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1. Background

Following the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement, it was announced that there will be a fourth round of the Household Support Fund to cover the period from April 2023 to March 2024, with a further £1 billion (£842m for England) being released to councils, 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 a whole year as opposed to previous versions which have been for six months only.

This 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 will enable Plymouth City Council to provide support to vulnerable households and individuals from April 2023 to 30 March 2024.

3. Household Support Fund

3.1 Funding available

Plymouth City Council will receive a grant of £4,589,594 in arrears and based on four management information (MI) returns in; July 2023, October 2023, January 2024 and April 2024 and the amounts committed at the point of their return.

3.2 Types of Support (DWP summary of expectations)

- Can be used to assist households with the costs of;
 - ENERGY - gas/electricity,
 - FOOD - water, food,
 - ESSENTIALS - phone/broadband, essential household items (e.g. white goods, beds/bedding, clothing, baby/sanitary products) and housing costs (in exceptional circumstance) and advice.
- Monies are no longer ringfenced to any proportion of funding for any particular 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.
- 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
- Cannot be used for advice or mortgage related costs.
- The scheme must also be adequately advertised.

3.2.1 Types of Support (detail)

- Energy and water: The Fund should primarily be used to support energy bills for any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking, or lighting, including oil or portable gas cylinders. It can also be used to support water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, as well as for sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- Food: The Fund can be used to provide support with food, whether in kind or through vouchers or cash.
- Essentials linked to energy and water: The Fund can be used to provide support with essentials linked to energy and water (for example warm clothing, blankets, the purchase of equipment such as fridges, freezers, ovens, slow cookers), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access energy, food and water. In particular, it is encouraged considering 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 could result in both immediate and long-lasting savings for the household.
- Wider essentials. The Fund can be used to support wider essential needs not linked to energy and water. These may include, but are not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, period and hygiene products, essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle, or paying for fuel. This list is not exhaustive.
 - Advice services. The Fund may be used to provide supplementary advice services to award recipients, including debt and benefit advice, where appropriate. The primary intention of The Fund is to provide crisis support for households, and it is expected any advice services to complement this. It is not expected that a large portion of funding to be spent on advice services. There needs to be a connection between the funding provided for advice services and the practical support provided under HSF. We anticipate that a significant proportion of this will be through signposting to existing advice services funded through other routes, such as the Help to Claim scheme which supports those making a claim to Universal Credit.
 - Housing costs. The Fund can be used to support housing costs. However, where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the Housing cost element of UC and HB rather than The Fund. In addition, eligibility for DHPs must first be considered before housing support is offered through The Fund. 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). It is expected that the focus of support should be on bills and that support for housing costs should only be given where existing housing support schemes do not meet need. Beyond this, Authorities have discretion to determine the most appropriate Fund for their area, based on their understanding of local need and with due regard to equality considerations.
 - Households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through The Fund if it is deemed necessary by their Authority. However, The Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies.
 - Individuals in receipt of some other form of housing support could still qualify for the other elements of The Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.
 - The Fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of The Fund (such as energy, food, 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. Those who are in receipt of or treated as receiving a qualifying benefit could be entitled to [Support for Mortgage Interest](#).

- 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 UC and HB. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for DHPs. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.

3.3 DWP Eligibility Criteria suggestions (Summary)

- ❖ Households with at least one child under 18 who resides in the property on a permanent basis
- ❖ Households on low incomes who are not able to receive/ eligible for cost of living payments;
- ❖ Families with children on low incomes, including single parent households
- ❖ Single adults on low incomes, in particular those living in private rented/ HMOs
- ❖ People with physical disabilities and serious health/mental illness on low incomes
- ❖ Households where someone has reached pension age
- ❖ Households with an unpaid carer
- ❖ Households with an care leaver
- ❖ People at risk of homelessness or in temporary accommodation
- ❖ Households who are eligible for children's Free School Meals
- ❖ Households with very vulnerable families (Children's Social Care, Refugee organisations, Young Parents service)
- ❖ Single homeless and private sector tenant support service

3.4 Implementation of fund

It is important to note that this fund can be used to support groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through existing schemes – Cost of Living Payments included. (DWP Guidance pg 2) Support is not restricted only to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits (DWP Guidancepg4)

- 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
- Can be provided in cash, vouchers and/or advise.
- Distribution of grants can be made using the voluntary/third sector.
- A proportion of the funds can be used for administration; however these costs should be kept to a minimum, in order to maximise the overarching funds available to support our most vulnerable citizens. Due to the approach being adopted in the deployment of these funds, the administration cost is expected to be in the region of £145,000 (3% of total funding)

3.5 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.

3.6 Receipt of funds

The grant will be paid in arrears and based on MI quarterly returns. Payment will be made in arrears after each interim MI returns and the final MI return at the end of April 2024.

3.7 What the Household Support fund it NOT

The Household support fund should not be confused with the Governments **“Cost of Living Payments.”**

The Cost of living payment is three payments totalling up to £900 for those eligible and on means-tested benefits, such as Universal Credit or Pension Credit, in 2023/24. This follows the £650 Cost of Living Payment made to over eight million people in 2022. There will also be further payments worth £150 for eligible disabled people and £300 for pensioners due later this year, meaning the most vulnerable can receive up to £1,350 in direct payments. The £301 payment will be sent out automatically and directly to recipients, meaning those eligible do not need to apply or do anything to receive it. The payment reference for bank accounts will be DWP COLP, along with the claimant's National Insurance number.

4. Grant Usage - The Household Support Fund will be used to support the following PLYMOUTH Households/Individuals most in need:

- i. People who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits
- ii. People who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only and people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date
- iii. Large families or single-income families with children of all ages- Particularly those entitled to Free School Meals
- iv. Low income families – also including single people
- v. Pensioners,
- vi. Unpaid carers,
- vii. Care leavers
- viii. Disabled People with physical disabilities and or serious health/mental illness on low incomes people especially those where the illness and disability is causing people to experience financial difficulties and advice is required.
- ix. People with No Resource to Public Funds

5. PLYMOUTH criteria - Households/Individuals

- Households with 'Gross income of less than £30,000.00 per annum; or less than £20,000.00 per annum once annual housing costs have been deducted' Annual housing costs will itemised as the 2 x following financial liabilities: total cost of annual mortgage or rent and total cost of annual council tax.
- Household with essential medical device in the home, or medicine that needs refrigeration
- Household with physical disabilities and or serious health/mental illness in need of financial support and advice
- Lone parent household with child under 19 in the home
- Single person households with or without children
- Households with Care Leavers and Foster Carers
- Households with an unpaid Carer in the household
- Households at risk of fuel poverty. ie - unable to afford their ongoing energy bills due to high need for energy and / or low income
- Households at risk of food poverty. ie - unable to afford their ongoing food bills
- Unable to self-refer to Citizen's Advice Plymouth's HSF scheme independently
- Families entitled to Free School Meals
- Have savings less than £10,000

6. Priority will be given to Plymouth Household/People who:

- 1) Have not benefited from previous Household support grants
- 2) Are entitled to but not claiming benefits
- 3) Are Low income Households/people that demonstrate that they are at risk of fuel or food poverty.
- 4) Temp accommodation

Grant Usage – Summary of Criteria

The table below shows the proposed criteria for each Household/Individual.

Award	Criteria
i. Focus on people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support	Plymouth households who meet the criteria for qualifying benefits. Households must also demonstrate that they are at risk of fuel or food poverty. Household should be Low income households (Less than £30K per year) and in need, with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.
ii. Target people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only and people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date.	Plymouth households who are currently entitled to and claiming Housing Benefit ONLY. Must have started and application or be in receipt of Housing Benefit on the 1 st April 2023, and not be in receipt of any other related benefit.
iii. Large families or single-income families, with children of all ages (under 19) Particularly those entitled to Free School Meals (All Plymouth residents who are entitled to and are currently claiming Free School Meals for a Child or Children).	Households must demonstrate that they are at risk of fuel or food poverty. Be low income households (Less than £30K pa) in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities. Targeted support for 2 to 16+ who receive Free School Meals and/or Pupil Premium over all school holidays within the financial year 2023/24
iv. low income households in need also including single people	Households must demonstrate that they are at risk of fuel or food poverty. Be low income households (Less than £30K pa) in need
v. Pensioners Additional need above DHP CTS Pensioner Additional Support	All Plymouth residents of pensionable age who are entitled to or are currently claiming Pension Credit, Council Tax Support
vi. Unpaid carers – people with caring duties -	All Plymouth Residents who are known unpaid carers in 2023/34
vii. Care Leavers and Foster Children payments	All Children on Plymouth City Council's Social Care system who are currently care leavers or in Foster care.
viii. Support for disabled households	To provide emergency support to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled people. Households must demonstrate that they are at risk of fuel or food poverty to enable people 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
ix. Targeted support to assist those with No Resource to Public Funds (including Syrian/ Afghanistan Refugees and Asylum Seekers households known directly to PCC).	People identified as having no resource to Public Funds