

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

Round 7 April 2025 – March 2026

Briefing March 2025



SUMMARY OF FUND AND GUIDANCE

On 30 October 2024, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended for a further twelve months, from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It is expected that this will be the final round of HSF. Although this is informally considered an extension to the previous six Household Support Fund schemes, it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions as is set out in the Grant Determination.

Plymouth has been allocated a total of £4,044,511.26.

The **primary objective** of The Fund is to provide **crisis** support to vulnerable households in the most need with the cost of essentials. The **secondary objective** is to provide **preventative** support to prevent vulnerable households from falling into – or falling further into – crisis. This includes low-income households in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events. These target groups reflect existing local priorities.

Authorities are expected to offer support throughout the duration of The Fund Period and must develop delivery plans to reflect this, with the discretion to determine the most appropriate scheme for their area, based on their understanding of local need and with due regard to equality considerations.

Eligible spend

- 1 Eligible crisis support includes:
 - Essentials – eg energy, water and food support
 - Wider Essentials eg bills, clothing, hygiene products, transport related costs. Authorities are encouraged to consider how this support could deliver longer-term prevention of crisis. This may include, for example, insulation or energy efficient household items which reduce bills, the purchase of equipment such as fridges, freezers, ovens, slow cookers or costs associated with obtaining these essentials, for example, delivery, installation.
 - Housing costs with the focus of support on bills and that support for housing costs should only be given where existing housing support schemes do not meet need.
- 2 Eligible preventative support includes:
 - Advice services
 - Join-up between service providers, such as co-location points
 - Any support with the aim of providing longer-term and sustainable solutions eg assistance with and/or access to affordable food such as subsidised food pantries and community kitchen and provision of cooking lessons with an emphasis on cost-effective methods.

Routes of support

Authorities can deliver the scheme through a variety of routes, including but not limited to:

- proactive support by identifying households in need
- application-based support where individuals have the opportunity to come forward to ask the Authority (or Third Party Organisation) for support – this is a requirement
- issuing grants to Third Party Organisations to provide support on behalf of the Authority.

Eligibility

Our support will focus on suggested households identified by the funding guidance:

- Households with at least one child under 18 who resides in the property on a permanent basis.
- 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 a 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

DELIVERY PLAN

Food vouchers for school holidays for children entitled to free school meals and other struggling families as identified by schools.

During previous rounds of HSF, it was found that there was an increasing number of children identified by the schools as needing this support. This increased from 12,516 children to 13,000 children during the year 2023/24. During the HSF delivery plans for 1 April to 30 March 2025, it was agreed to offer £10 on food vouchers during the summer months and £13 during winter holidays to reflect the need for additional food, and hot food, for children over the winter period. Feedback from parents has indicated that they would prefer the amount to remain consistent throughout the year to prevent confusion. Therefore this round we will provide £11 per voucher throughout the year. This will ensure the budget available remains similar and ensure a clearer offer for families.

Targeted Crisis and Prevention work for eligible households through a collaborative multi-agency approach

In HSF 6, we trialled an initiative to target households using LIFT (Low Income Families Tracker) data and Parity data (homes at high risk of cold and damp) to ensure support was directed at those people who were at risk of falling into crisis. We will continue to develop this targeted approach working across multiple agencies to ensure people get the right support for their needs. Working with wider organisations we will also take a preventative approach through ensuring wraparound support. This will include:

- Financial and benefits advice and support from Citizens Advice Plymouth
1. Energy saving measures and damp and mould treatment packs to support the aims of the Cold Homes Task Force action plan enable residents to take action before winter and lessen poor health impacts.
 2. Adult Carers, Veterans and households where there is a physical disability or mental ill-health

Self-Referral Routes

Alongside targeted work, there will be application-based support where individuals have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. These will include:

- Drop-in advice sessions by Citizens Advice at agreed outreach locations across the city
- Telephone referrals through Citizens Advice Plymouth, Age UK and PEC

Emergency Food

There remains an ongoing need to support the supply of emergency food, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis. The new guidance provides an opportunity to fund preventative food work. This will enable us to fund:

- Emergency Food for people in absolute crisis via the Soup Run, Plymouth Food bank, Provide Devon, Eldertree
- Food education work and provision of essential cooking equipment essentials at targeted locations including social supermarkets in Stonehouse and Whitleigh. As well as tackling food poverty this approach will help to build skills, knowledge and social capital.

Households at risk of becoming homeless

To prevent households from becoming homeless, or who live in temporary accommodation with no access to cooking facilities, or to aid resettling into permanent accommodation or otherwise in need as identified by Community Connections and other partners including PAUSE, PDAS and PATH. This work can also be supported by targeted work using the LIFT data dashboard going forward and we are in discussion with the team as how best to do this.

Care Leavers, Young Carers, Children's Social Care families in need

Children's Social Care will continue to target families in crisis or with children in need, as well as care leavers and young carers.

Welcoming Spaces and Co-location points

As per previous rounds of HSF, we will provide grants to support the VCSE to deliver welcoming spaces within the community during the winter months through an open application process.

We will also work with the VCSE, libraries and Wellbeing Hubs to identify appropriate co-location points where advice services, healthcare and wellbeing/social activities are provided for a range of people in one location, enabling us to support households in crisis as well as put in preventative measures.

Communication

Details of the support available from this round of the Household Support Fund will be shared in line with DWP guidance through PCC website, VCS promotion and Social Media.