

Household Support Fund (1 October 2022 – 31 March 2023): – DRAFT Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England

Introduction

1. Additional funding* has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. This funding covers the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive. Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the accompanying grant determination and this guidance. This guidance sets out the required collaboration between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Local Authorities, including their delivery partners (such as District Councils as well as any charitable or third-party organisations) to successfully meet the policy intent within the agreed framework. It also provides the framework that Authorities need to work within and the arrangements for distribution of funding and reporting.
2. DWP is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer The Fund and provide assistance to households most in need. **Note: County Councils and Unitary Authorities will be referred to as ‘Authorities’ and the Household Support Fund will be referred to as ‘The Fund’ throughout the remainder of this guidance.** Authorities must work together with District Councils to ensure the funding meets its objectives by identifying those most in need.
3. The expectation is that The Fund should be used to support households in the most need – particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available, including the Cost of Living Payments set out on 26 May 2022 and the energy support set out on 3 February, enhanced on 26 May 2022, and detailed on [29 July](#) but who are nevertheless in need (details on eligibility for these schemes are at Annex A). This may include but is not limited to people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit only, people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date as well as people who have fuel costs but who cannot access the £400 of energy support from the Energy Bill Support Scheme or the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July. There may be groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through these schemes, for example large families or single-income families. It is important to stress that The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.
4. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low income households during the period of The Fund and Local Authorities should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy. Support which can make a quick but sustainable impact on energy

* Funding amount and individual Authority allocations will be made available once formal approvals have been received.

costs is particularly encouraged – for example, insulation of hot water tanks, fitting draft excluders to a door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The Fund can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, 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.

5. Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of grants for advice provision). Every area must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis i.e. residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is flexibility on exactly how this can be run, including through third parties rather than directly by the Local Authority.
6. Authorities have access to DWP's Searchlight portal which provides information on individual citizens' entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Since June 2021 we have provided Authorities with information relating to Universal Credit (UC) claims with limited capability for work or earnings below the free school meals and free prescription thresholds in their area. In April 2022 DWP established a data share covering people receiving the Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit elements of Pension Credit, as well as for all claimants on income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA (IR)). Authorities may find this information useful in identifying those most in need.
7. In October, DWP will also introduce a further data share for those who are only in receipt of Housing Benefit. This group is not eligible for the means-tested Cost of Living Payments unless of pension age or eligible for a Disability Cost of Living Payment and Local Authorities should consider how they could use this data to provide support to this group.
8. However, support is not restricted only to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits. Therefore, Authorities should also use other sources of information to identify vulnerable households, including advice from professionals who come into contact with vulnerable households such as social workers and Supporting Families keyworkers and housing workers. As above, Authorities should also have a mechanism to consider applications for support.
9. This guidance applies to Authorities in England only and when finalised, should be read in conjunction with the Household Support Fund Grant Determination issued alongside it.

Communication

10. The Authority must, as appropriate and practical, reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases.
11. Local Authorities must make public their plans for The Fund, for example on their Authority website.

Objective and key principles

12. The objective of The Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.
13. Although this is considered an extension to the previous two Household Support Fund schemes, it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions as will be set out in the Grant Determination letter. Any underspends from the previous schemes cannot be carried forward.
14. Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2023 and cannot be held over for future usage. All Authorities are encouraged to ensure wherever possible that any vouchers issued are redeemed before the end of The Fund, or shortly thereafter, or consider recycling unused vouchers. It is, however, acceptable for vouchers that have been purchased and delivered to households before the end of The Fund to be spent shortly thereafter (see paragraphs 104-107 on Committed Spend).
15. When administering The Fund Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles:
 - use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information;
 - use the funding from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. Authorities can also use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials;
 - in exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, subject to the provisions at paragraph 30 below.
 - this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.
 - work together with District Councils and third parties, including where necessary and appropriate other local services. This may include social workers, housing and family support services, and may incorporate intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of The Fund.
16. When deciding how to help people, Authorities should consider:
 - how they plan to provide support to vulnerable households, i.e. paying into bank accounts, use of cash and vouchers, provision of goods;
 - any risks associated with these payment methods – see section Managing the risk of fraud.

Working with other organisations

17. Authorities must work collaboratively with District Councils and other organisations in their area who may come into contact with those households who may benefit from this grant. Authorities that do not have the mechanisms in place to administer this grant should consider whether District Councils are better placed to do so on their behalf. Authorities are encouraged to engage with District Councils as quickly as possible to ensure roles, responsibilities and effective arrangements are put in place to deliver The Fund promptly and efficiently.
18. Third party organisations may include but are not limited to:
 - Registered charities and voluntary organisations

- Schools
- Food banks
- General Practitioners
- Care organisations

19. Where Authorities are working with Third Party Organisations (TPOs), this should be done on an objectively fair, transparent and non-discriminatory basis, having regard to the time available to deliver The Fund. As with District Councils, Authorities should make arrangements with any TPOs as quickly as possible.

20. Where a TPO returns unused funding after The Fund has ended the Authority can re-issue any returned funding within a reasonable timeframe but only under the category that the spend was originally reported against. Authorities are able to distribute funding themselves and do not have to go back through the original TPO.

21. For audit purposes where an Authority re-issues returned TPO funding they must follow this process:

- Authority must confirm by email, copying S151 officer,
- the amount that has been returned,
- reason for the return (e.g., TPO underspend),
- what the original spend was reported against in their FINAL MI return,
- confirm they intend to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

Establishing eligibility

22. In accordance with their general legal duties, Authorities must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach including how they are defining eligibility and how households access The Fund. We expect Authorities to review any existing approach and to have a strong rationale for their targeting so that funding is available to the households who most need it.

23. Authorities have the flexibility within The Fund to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households to prevent escalation of problems. Authorities should ensure that they consider the needs of various households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.

24. Authorities should particularly consider how they can support those vulnerable households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living, including the:

- Energy Bills Support Scheme and the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July;
- Council Tax Rebate and the associated £144m Discretionary Fund;
- Cost of Living Payments for those on means tested benefits;
- £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment;

- One-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment (through the Winter Fuel Payment)

25. The eligibility criteria for the schemes listed in paragraph 24 can be found at Annex A. The majority of households in England will receive some form of support from at least one of the above schemes. Authorities should have regard to the fact that receipt of any of the above support should not exclude a resident from receiving support through The Fund in principle and households in receipt of support from these schemes may still be in need. It remains at the discretion of Authorities to establish their local eligibility and identify those most in need in their area.
26. The schemes in paragraph 24, however, do not cover everyone. For example, these schemes do not cover – and Authorities should consider prioritising – households:
- Who are eligible for but not claiming qualifying benefits;
 - Who become eligible for benefits after the relevant qualifying dates;
 - Are in receipt of Housing Benefit only;
 - Who are ordinarily eligible for benefits but who had a nil award in the qualifying period due to, for example, a fluctuation in income;
 - Who have fuel costs but who cannot access the £400 of energy support from the Energy Bill Support Scheme or the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July;
 - This list is not exhaustive and there may additionally be households that are vulnerable to rising costs despite being in receipt of this government support with the cost of living
27. Authorities must operate an application-based service for support to ensure those in need have a route to emergency support. This can be delivered directly by the Local Authority or by a third party on their behalf. Authorities should establish eligibility criteria for their application service and should communicate with residents to ensure that their scheme and the mechanism for applying is clear and accessible. If they wished, Authorities could make the entirety of their scheme application-based, but as with previous schemes Authorities can also proactively identify households who will benefit from support. However a Local Authority chooses to provide this funding, they must make sure that this support is clearly advertised to residents.
28. Authorities can also proactively identify households who will benefit from support. Where this is the case, Authorities should consider how they can ensure that they are focusing on those in the most need to prevent escalation of problems. There is no requirement for Authorities to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Authority's local eligibility criteria. However, in relation to housing costs, Authorities must establish whether other forms of support are available to the household, such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

Types of support

29. Eligible spend includes:

- Energy and water. The Fund should primarily be used to support with 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 with 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 (including for example period products, warm clothing, soap, 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, we encourage LAs to consider 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 with wider essential needs not linked to energy and water should Authorities consider this appropriate in their area. These may include, but are not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle, or paying for fuel. This list is not exhaustive.
- Housing Costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs. Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB) rather than The Fund. In addition, eligibility for DHPs must first be considered before emergency 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).
 - i. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - iii. 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.

iv. 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.

- Reasonable administrative costs. This includes reasonable costs incurred administering The Fund. These include for example:
 - i. staff costs
 - ii. advertising and publicity to raise awareness of The Fund
 - iii. web page design
 - iv. printing application forms
 - v. small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production

- Eligible spend does not include:
 - i. Advice services including debt advice;
 - ii. Mortgage costs.

30. It is expected that the focus of support should be on bills and that support for housing costs should only be given in exceptional cases of genuine emergency. 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.

31. There is no prescriptive definition of essentials. Authorities have discretion to assess what is reasonable to assist those in genuine need this winter with regard to the examples above.

32. Individual awards can be whatever type and amount is deemed appropriate by Authorities for the receiving household, bearing in mind the overall spend eligibility priorities listed above and the risk of fraud and error. Awards to any given household can either cover only one of the spend eligibility categories listed above, or can cover several.

33. Authorities should not make The Fund eligibility conditional on being employed or self-employed, or directly linked to a loss of earnings from employment or self-employment. This will ensure that there is no National Insurance Contribution liability payable on any payments by either the claimant, the Authority or employer.

Funding overlap

34. Authorities should consider household circumstances when making a decision on how to spend this grant. Households may be receiving other forms of support, and

this should be taken into account to avoid duplicating provision where possible. In particular, Local Authorities should prioritise those who have not already received additional support for the cost of living. However, families receiving other forms of assistance are not excluded from receiving support through The Fund.

Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds

35. Authorities can provide a basic safety net support to an individual, regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example if:
- there are community care needs
 - they have serious health problems
 - there is a risk to a child's wellbeing
36. The rules around immigration status have not changed. Authorities must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance.

Access to data

37. The Household Support Fund is being classified as Local Welfare Provision (LWP). The provision of DWP data to Authorities is under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 'Department for Work and Pensions and local authorities (Access, handling, exchange and protection of Department for Work and Pensions' and HM Revenue and Customs' data)'.
38. Authorities who have signed and returned the relevant section (Annex C) of the current DWP/LA MoU have legal permission to access DWP's Searchlight portal and specific UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and Housing Benefit Only data via a monthly data share for the purpose of The Fund.
39. Authorities will need to ensure they sign future iterations of the MoU and the appropriate Annex to continue to have the legal permission to access the below data sources for Local Welfare Provision.
40. Staff accessing Searchlight will need to be registered with the Employee Authentication System (EAS). Further information on Searchlight can be found in the Local Authority Searchlight Training Pack available in the Searchlight folder on Glasscubes (the LA/DWP online collaboration tool). If your Authority needs to discuss access to Glasscubes, contact DWP at LAWELFARE.LASUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK

DWP Searchlight

41. This portal provides information on individual citizens' entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Therefore, this data can be used to help Authorities identify those families and individuals to whom to target this support. Authorities may also wish to establish if other forms of support are available to the household. In relation to housing costs they must do so including by checking whether the household could receive DHPs. The Authority must also first consider if the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the HPG.

42. Searchlight can only be used to verify a specific individual's DWP benefit information. Therefore, if an Authority identified a group of potential customers who may be eligible for The Fund from their own records, they can access Searchlight to verify each claimant's DWP benefit entitlement (although benefit entitlement is not a condition of support).

Monthly Data Share

43. We are providing Authorities with details of UC claimants in their Authority whose income is below the Free School Meal and Free Prescription thresholds and those with limited capability for work both at individual level and summary level by Ward. We are also providing Authorities with details of customers in receipt of Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Authorities may find this information useful in identifying those most in need.

44. We are also introducing a further data share for those in receipt of Housing Benefit only. Individuals in this group are not eligible for a means-tested Cost of Living Payment and so this data share will allow Authorities to identify them and more easily consider their need for support.

45. The UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and HB only data will be provided monthly via Transfer Your File.

46. Authorities will receive 2 data shares on a monthly basis.

File one contains Individual data of -

the National Insurance number and names of UC claimants within the Authority area and:

- income below the thresholds of £7,400 per year for Free School Meals and income below the Free Prescription threshold of £935 per month as identified in their last UC assessment period;
- those with a Limited Capability for Work indicator within the last assessment period; and
- the number of children in the household.
- those whose award is subject to the Benefit Cap
- those in receipt of the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and Local Housing Allowance (available Autumn 2022)

the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of customers in receipt of Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA (IR)).

the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of customers who are in receipt of HB but not in receipt of a means tested benefit (for example: UC, Income based Jobseekers Allowance, ESA (IR), Income Support and Pension Credit)

File two – contains aggregate data showing those UC claimants at or below the:

- Free School Meal income threshold;
- Free Prescription income threshold; and
- are in the Limited Capability for Work group.

For a full breakdown of the file contents see **Annex B**

47. Authorities also have access to their own non-DWP data to help identify vulnerable households who may be eligible for support under The Fund.

Reporting requirements

48. Authorities are required to make two Statements of Grant Usage and management information (MI) returns – **see the Grant Determination** when finalised. The deadline for completing these returns is shown in the table below. Completed MI returns should be sent to LAWELFARE.PDT@DWP.GOV.UK

49. An interim MI return is required by 25 January 2023 for spend for the period 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022. The interim MI return will be used to determine eligible spend to 31 December 2022 and an interim grant payment will be made to your Authority for this period when the information in your return has been verified.

50. A final MI return is required showing total spend from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 by 28 April 2023. The final MI return will be used to determine total eligible spend to 31 March 2023 and a final grant payment will be made to your Authority for this period when the information in your return has been verified.

51. Authorities should use the standard MI reporting template provided, which incorporates the Statement of Grant Usage. For the purpose of this section:

- **Grant allocation** – refers to the amount of grant allocated to a TPO to distribute to vulnerable households.
- **Grant award or spend refers** to the amount provided or paid to vulnerable households under the remit of this grant.

MI return	Reporting period		Deadline
Interim MI return	From: 1 October 2022	To: 31 December 2022	Deadline: 25 January 2023
Final MI return	From: 1 October 2022	To: 31 March 2023	Deadline: 28 April 2023

52. It is the responsibility of Authorities to provide the MI returns to DWP. Failure to return the MI by the deadline may result in a delayed payment or a payment being refused.

53. Where Authorities (including District Councils) issue awards directly to vulnerable households they should either obtain information at source or via information or data

they have access to, to complete the split of spend and number of awards across the reporting categories e.g. households with children and pensioners and food, energy bills, essentials linked to food and energy bills, wider essentials and (in exceptional circumstances) housing support. Where Authorities decide to deliver support to vulnerable households through TPOs they should use whatever information the TPO holds, or other available data, to split the level of spend and volume of awards across the eligibility criteria to the best of their ability.

54. The different elements of the MI template are shown below together with guidance on how to complete them.

Table 1 Governance

Table 1: Governance	Response
Local Authority (full name)	
Section 151 officer (name)	
Section 151 officer (email address)	
Is the Section 151 officer / CFO copied into the return to DWP? (Y/N)	
Reporting Period	
Approved signed off by	
LA Single Point of Contact	
Date Returned to DWP	

55. Each MI return must include your Section 151 Officer's name and email address to provide assurance on validation of funding spend. If the Section 151 Officer is also the SPOC for the scheme, please input details in both response fields.

56. We also require you to copy your Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer into the email, providing this assurance when you return the MI template to DWP. This will be checked against DWP records. By doing this you confirm that the Section 151 Officer has agreed the correctness of spend reported.

57. Please indicate that you have done this in row 4 of the table "Is the section 151 officer / CFO copied into the return to DWP?" If the MI is incomplete/incorrect it will be returned to the Authority by the DWP for correction and re-submission which must also be copied to your Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer.

58. Table 2: Total Awards

Table 2: Total Awards	
Item	Spend (£s)
a) Total amount provided to vulnerable households	
b) Administration Costs	
c) Total LA spend (a+b)	£ -

59. Total amount provided to vulnerable households – this is the total amount of The Fund that has been paid/awarded to vulnerable households. It includes amounts paid by Authorities and by TPOs on behalf of Authorities. It should not include amounts allocated to TPOs that have not been spent during the reporting period. This cell will automatically populate from the total in table 3. Note, all cells which automatically populate are shaded grey and are protected.

60. Administration costs – this includes reasonable costs incurred administering The Fund. These include for example:

- staff costs
- advertising and publicity to raise awareness of The Fund
- web page design
- printing application forms
- small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production

61. Total LA spend – this is the total of the above. It is the amount that will be used to determine the grant funding payment from DWP to cover the full cost of administering the grant in an Authority area. A single grant payment will be made in arrears on the receipt of a fully completed and verified MI return. This cell will automatically populate from the figures in rows a and b.

62. Table 3: Total Value of Awards Split by Household Composition

Table 3: Total Value of Awards Split by Household Composition						
		a) Households with Children	b) Households with Pensioners	c) Households with a Disabled Person	d) Other households	e) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d)
Row 1	Spend (£s)					£ -
Row 2	Volumes					-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped					-

63. Table 3 relates to grant spend, the volume of awards made, and number of households helped in relation to households with children, pensioners, a disabled person and all other households. Rows 1 and 2 relate to grant awards made by Authorities (including District Councils) directly to vulnerable households, and grant awards to vulnerable households made by TPOs. Row 3 refers to the number of households helped.

64. Spend (£s) - this is the amount paid/awarded to vulnerable households within the eligibility criteria. Authorities should make every effort to gather information to establish the household type. For example, for households with children whether a child resides in the household (including being the only member of the household) in order to complete the template as fully as possible. This information is important for DWP to evaluate how successful The Fund has been in providing support to households with children.

65. Authorities should either gather information or check existing records they hold or have access to, to establish whether the household includes a child or a pensioner (as defined below) or a disabled person and complete columns a, b and c accordingly. Responsibility for MI reporting rests with Authorities. Where Shire Counties pass grant allocations to District Councils, District Councils should pass the information relating to columns a, b and c to the County Council/Unitary Authority to collate the information and send one collated template to DWP.

66. For the purposes of recording spend in the MI template, if an award relates to more than one of 'Households with Children', 'Households with Pensioners' (i.e. pensioners living with children) and Households with a Disabled Person (for example disabled people living with children), Authorities have the flexibility to categorise and record the spend under the household composition(s) which they consider more fitting. In determining this, Authorities should, as far as is possible, consider who the award is principally intended to support.

67. For the purpose of the Reporting Requirements for this grant (and without prejudice to other schemes):

68. The definition of a household with a child is a household containing any person:

- who will be under the age of 19 at the time of award or;
- a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid or free school meals are provided.

69. The definition of a household with a pensioner is any household containing any person:

- who has reached state pension age at the time of award

70. The definition of disability and disabled people aligns with the definition in the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, a disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it normally would to complete a daily task like getting dressed;
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

71. For Tables 3 to 6

- Volumes - this is the number of individual/separate payments made to vulnerable households within the eligibility criteria. If multiple awards are made to the same household throughout the period of The Fund each award should be counted separately. Where an award is made to a household with multiple children, it should be classed as a single award.
- Number of Households Helped: This is the number of individual households helped by The Fund within the eligibility criteria. There should be only one record for each household helped, even if multiple awards are made to the same household throughout the period of The Fund.
- Reporting TPO Spend and TPO Volumes - we acknowledge that some TPOs, for example, charitable and voluntary organisations such as food banks, have limited or no access to household information and may not be in a position to provide this information to the same level of accuracy as Authorities. We are therefore asking Authorities and TPOs to report the actual level of spend and the volume of awards across the different eligibility criteria in rows 1-3 to the best of their ability.

72. Table 4: Total Value of Awards Split by Category

Table 4: Total Value of Awards Split by Category							
	a) Energy and Water	b) Food excluding FSM support in the holidays	c) Free School Meals support in the holidays	d) Essentials linked to Energy and Water	e) Wider Essentials	f) Housing Costs	g) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d+e+f)
Row 1	Spend (£s)						£ -
Row 2	Volumes						-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped						-

73. Table 4 relates to grant spend, volume of awards made, and households helped in relation to food, energy and water bills, essentials linked to energy and water bills, wider essentials, and (in exceptional circumstances) housing costs.

74. Table 5: Total Value of Awards Split by Types of Support

Table 5: Total Value of Awards Split by Types of Support							
		a) Vouchers	b) Cash Awards	c) Third Party Organisations	d) Tangible Items	e) Other	f) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d+e)
Row 1	Spend (£s)						£ -
Row 2	Volumes						-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped						-

75. Table 5 relates to grant spend, volume of awards made, and households helped in relation to vouchers, Cash Awards, Third Party Organisations, Tangible Items and Other.

76. By Tangible Items we mean products that are of a physical nature such as clothing or household items.

77. Table 6: Total Value of Awards Split by Access Routes

Table 6: Total Value of Awards Split by Access Routes					
		a) Application-based Support	b) Proactive Support	c) Other	d) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c)
Row 1	Spend (£s)				£ -
Row 2	Volumes				-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped				-

78. Table 6 relates to grant spend, volume of awards made, and households helped in relation to Application-based support, Proactive Support and Other.

79. By application-based support, we mean any awards made through a successful application for support made to the Authority by eligible recipients or through third parties who run self-referral support services on behalf of the Authority.

80. By proactive support we mean any awards made as a result of the Authority proactively identifying recipients.

81. Total - Table 3 Row 1 column g, Table 4 row 1 column g, Table 5 Row 1 column f and Table 6 column row 1 d are protected and will automatically add up spend across the different headings. This figure will automatically populate Table 2 row a.

82. When allocating spend and the volume of awards across the eligibility criteria please follow the guidance below.

- Each award needs to be allocated four times – one allocation for each of Tables 3-6 so that when you report on the total spent on:
 - i. Table 3, award by household composition;
 - ii. Table 4 award by category of spend;
 - iii. Table 5 type of support; and
 - iv. Table 6 access route

The total amount you have paid will be the same across the four tables.

83. Tables 3 to 6 ask for spend and award volumes to be recorded against four sets of criteria, one for each table. Therefore, the details of each award need to be recorded four times; once against one set of criteria in Table 3, then a second time for Table 4 and again in Tables 5 and 6. Shown below is a worked example of how the MI template should be completed.

84. Authorities are asked to report and manage spend in relation to all of these areas. For example, if a £100 award of vouchers is made following a successful application for support to a household with children for food, you would allocate £100 to the 'Households with children' section in Table 3, £100 to the 'food' section in Table 4, £100 to the Vouchers section of Table 5 and £100 to the Application-based support

of Table 6. You would also allocate one award and one household supported in these sections of Tables 3 to 6.

85. If The Fund payments are paid directly to a vulnerable household's Council Tax Account in lieu of a different payment method i.e. for food excluding FSM in the holidays /energy and water; then the amount paid must be recorded under the intended heading, in this case food excluding FSM support in the holiday. If the payment is in relation to both food and energy in equal measures put 50% of the award in each of the two categories.

Additional guidance and examples when working with TPOs

86. Please include, where possible, the amount of spend across the following categories:

- households with children, households with pensioners, households with a disabled person, other households, and
- energy and water bills, essentials linked to energy and water bills, wider essentials, and (in exceptional circumstances) housing costs.

87. For example, if you have allocated:

- grant funding to a food bank to provide food to vulnerable people, establish the amount of that allocation the food bank has spent and enter in Table 4 the full amount spent under "food excluding FSM through the school holidays" as you know that the grant allocation has been spent in respect of food in term time and not covering FSMs, and in Table 3 provide the split across household composition to the best of your ability in accordance with the example below.
- grant funding to a charity that specialises in providing vulnerable children with clothing, establish the amount of that allocation the charity has spent and enter the full amount spent in 'households with children' and the full amount of the grant spent in 'wider essentials'. This is because you know that the purpose of the grant is for children and the nature of support is clothing which comes under wider essentials.
- As this is TPO spend record the full amount of the grant spend under "Third Party Organisations" in Table 5 and record the full amount of the grant spend under "Other" in Table 6. For all entries, please add volumes of awards and numbers of households helped when completing the MI.

88. The amount of MI available will vary considerably across each TPO. Please use whatever information is already available or reasonable to collect to be as accurate as possible.

89. Shown below are some examples of how to complete the template.

Example 1

90. A food bank operates on an open basis where anyone can turn up and pick up food and supplies. This is not an award made directly to vulnerable households by an Authority. The cost is picked up by a TPO, for example, the food bank. The MI template should be completed as per guidance below. The award was not made as a result of an application nor proactive support.

91. The total value of grant spent, the volume of awards made by the charity or voluntary organisations providing the food bank and number of households helped should be entered in Table 3 (The Authority or food bank provider will need to provide the split

between household composition to the best of their ability) and column b (Food Excluding FSM support in the holidays) of Table 4. These values should be reported in column c (Third Party Organisations) of Table 5 and column c (Other) of Table 6.

Example 2

92. The Authority directly provides vouchers to vulnerable households as a result of the Authority proactively identifying the recipients. These could be redeemable at a number of food outlets including supermarkets or food banks. Food voucher amounts can vary depending on how many children reside in the household. Authorities are expected to collect or verify information to establish whether the award is made to a household with children or a household with pensioners or a disabled person. The MI template should be completed as follows:

- the value of awards should be entered in Table 3 in 'spend' row 1 column a (households with children), row 1 column b (households with pensioners), row 1 column c (households with a disabled person) and row 1 column d (other households) based on the information the Authority has been capturing to split spend across these categories.
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 3 row 2 (Volumes) column a and row 2 column b based on the information the Authority has been capturing to split the volume of awards spent across these categories.
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 3 row 3 (number of households helped) column a and row 3 column b based on the information the Authority has been capturing to split the number of households helped across these categories.
- the value of awards should be entered in Table 4 row 1 column b because it relates to food excluding FSM support outside the holidays.
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 4 row 2 column b because it relates to food
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 4 row 3 (number of households helped) column b because it relates to food
- the value of awards should be entered in Table 5 row 1 column a because it relates to vouchers
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 5 row 2 column a because it relates to vouchers
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 5 row 3 column a because it relates to vouchers
- the value of awards should be entered in Table 6 row 1 column b because it relates to proactive support
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 6 row 2 column b because it relates to proactive support
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 6 row 3 column b because it relates to proactive support

DWP engagement

93. LA relationship managers from DWP's LA Partnership, Engagement and Delivery division will contact Authorities to provide support and gather information throughout

The Fund. Examples where LA relationship managers will contact Authorities for initial compliance include:

- the MI templates have not been completed and returned;
- the MI templates have not been copied to the Authority's S151 officer or CFO.
- An incorrect template has been used – MI should only be returned on the MI template provided no local versions or PDF copies are acceptable.

94. They will also contact Authorities where further clarification is needed in respect of the information provided on the MI reporting template, if for example:

- critical data is missing, or the data looks odd, or
- the Authority is reporting a high value of awards where they have not been able to establish the household composition. We may need the Authority to explain why that is the case and provide supporting evidence.
- the Authority is reporting a high value of administration costs. We may need the Authority to explain why that is the case and provide supporting evidence.
- there is a significant gap between actual and allocated spend. We may need the Authority to explain why spend was so low.

95. They will look to identify good practice and identify case studies where appropriate.

96. Authorities are required to complete a delivery plan to outline their intentions for The Fund and to demonstrate some of the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding. The delivery plan will be due one month after the start of The Fund on 28 October 2022. At the end of the The Fund we will also ask for a summary of spend against the final delivery plan with this due at the same time as the final MI in April 2023.

97. DWP will also continue to engage with Authorities throughout the course of The Fund and will provide opportunities to engage with the Department and other Authorities to share good practice and work collaboratively. DWP will continue to respond to questions we receive via the designated inbox as quickly as possible.

98. Where Authorities work with District Councils and TPOs it is the responsibility of Authorities to collect and collate MI and complete one collated MI return and submit to DWP.

DWP funding arrangements

99. The Fund is ring-fenced to be spent as detailed in this guidance and the accompanying grant determination. To ensure that the objectives of The Fund are being met during the course of the grant and reduce administration costs for all concerned, including the need for DWP to recover underspend, grant payment will be made in arrears upon DWP being satisfied with the MI returns. This will enable DWP to adjust the amount of the payment based on the MI returns.

100. Payment of The Fund from DWP to Authorities will be made in arrears after the interim MI return in January 2023 and the final MI return at the end of grant period in April 2023 after we have verified the MI. If an Authority feels that the payment arrangements will create significant cash flow problems, please notify DWP as soon

as possible with supporting evidence. Both an interim and a final MI return will be required and grant payments will be made in respect of the periods 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 and 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

101. MI returns **must be endorsed by the S151** officer in accordance with their statutory assurance responsibility in order for the grant payment to be made by copying your Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer into the email.

102. The guidance for completion is provided on a separate tab within the MI template.

103. The definition of spend includes grant funding that has been provided to vulnerable households, within the scope of the eligibility criteria, and within the period of The Fund 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

104. Spend also includes 'committed spend'. For the purpose of The Fund committed spend relates to grant funding that has been spent and delivered to vulnerable households even though the vulnerable household may not have used their grant funding. An example would be the award of a food voucher on 31 March 2023 to a vulnerable household. It would be unreasonable to expect the household to be restricted to redeem the voucher on the day of receipt. In this example, spend has been committed by the Authority, support has been provided to a vulnerable household and, therefore, should be included as eligible grant spend. It would be reasonable to expect the vulnerable household to redeem the food voucher during the month following the end of The Fund.

105. However, committed spend does not include large volumes of food vouchers, procured quite late in The Fund, which cannot be distributed to vulnerable households within the period of The Fund.

106. Authorities that plan to order vouchers in bulk should attempt to be realistic in the volumes ordered to avoid holding large stocks of unused vouchers at the end of The Fund. Alternatively, Authorities may want to consider:

- Purchasing vouchers on a sale or return basis, so that they can return any unused vouchers, or
- Expired vouchers returned to an Authority after The Fund has ended can be recycled and re-issued within a reasonable timeframe but must be done so under the same categories of spend as originally reported and under the same terms as The Fund they were issued under.
- For audit purposes where an Authority recycles and reuses expired vouchers they must follow this process:
 - Authority must confirm by email, copying S151 officer,
 - the amount that has been returned,
 - reason for the return (e.g., expired voucher),
 - what the original spend was reported against in their FINAL MI return,
 - confirm they intend to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

107. The definition of committed spend for the purpose of The Fund does not affect its accounting treatment in accordance with normal rules.

108. The timetable for provision of funding is as follows:

Funding:

Payment	Amount (%)	Date	Notes
Interim	Actual grant spend up to 100% of grant allocation*	February/March 2023	Payment made in arrears
Final	Actual grant spend up to 100% of grant allocation*	June/July 2023	Payment made in arrears

*Subject to eligible spend criteria

Managing the risk of fraud

109. Fraudsters can target funds of this type.

110. As with any welfare payment to vulnerable recipients there is a risk of fraud, as recipients might appear to be eligible when they are not.

111. To help mitigate this risk, Authorities should involve District Councils and other organisations chosen to administer The Fund to help identify vulnerable families, households and individuals.

112. Authorities wishing to work with TPOs to deliver The Fund must carry out suitable due diligence checks to ensure they are viable and able to deliver the support. So, for example, ensuring all charities are registered and taking extra caution if they are new organisations.

113. Authorities are also encouraged to ensure checks are in place to verify the identity of those eligible.

114. Authorities are encouraged to ask neighbouring Authorities to work together to help prevent double provision and/or no provision – especially where allocation of provision is by school in one area and by residential address in another.

115. It is for Authorities to decide how payments are made to recipients. However, when making decisions, Authorities should consider the risks involved. Although they still carry fraud risks, vouchers should be used instead of cash where possible as this helps to mitigate the risk of the money being spent by the recipient on things outside of the policy intent.

116. Authorities should ensure that they consider and put in place suitable controls when making use of vouchers as part of The Fund. Authorities may wish to consider

restricting access to these vouchers; and also consider restricting usage to ensure that they cannot be spent outside the intended scope of The Fund.

117. It is important to be vigilant to fraud and error risks in relation to housing costs, and to assure yourself that the appropriate checks are in place. Authorities should take appropriate steps to ensure they take into consideration household income and rent liability which may be requested and reviewed as set out in the grant determination. We expect Authorities to work with district councils to ensure support is going to those with genuine need and to help minimise the risk of fraud on housing support.

118. Where possible, any payments made into a bank account should be in the same name of the person that is eligible for that payment. Authorities have access to a range of data sources, and checks can be carried out against this data to verify the identity of the recipient. Authorities are also encouraged to use existing tools at their disposal to verify personal bank accounts.

119. If the Authority has any grounds for suspecting financial irregularity in the use of any grant paid under this Determination, it must notify DWP immediately, explain what steps are being taken to investigate the suspicion and keep DWP informed about the progress of the investigation. For these purposes 'financial irregularity' includes fraud or other impropriety, mismanagement, and the use of grant for purposes other than those for which it was provided.

120. If you suspect fraud, you should notify DWP of the:

- number of instances
- total amount lost

121. This will help DWP identify any emerging threats and share them with other Authorities, so they can take steps to prevent and detect any fraud in their Fund.

Complying with Subsidy (previously State Aid) rules

122. The funding is intended to benefit households most in need of support with energy bills, food, related essentials, wider essentials and (exceptionally) housing costs, in order to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. The funds should not be used for any economic undertaking.

123. Whichever way you use the funding, including where you work in partnership with others, you should consider all Subsidy rules (previously state aid) issues. Check whether the 'de minimis' regulation exception applies. You should also follow government procurement procedures where relevant.

Administration costs

124. The Household Support Fund funding allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable Authorities to deliver The Fund. Authorities should deduct their administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining.

125. In all cases, Authorities should keep administrative costs to a reasonable level.

126. Administration costs for each Authority will be published on www.gov.uk alongside detail of all spend and volumes related to The Fund.

Public Sector Equality Duty

127. In accordance with the public sector equality duty, DWP has had due regard for the potential equalities impacts of this grant.
128. Under the Equality Act 2010, all public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. For the purposes of this grant, you should consider how any support that helps people facing severe financial hardship impacts those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act.
129. When developing your local delivery frameworks, you should ensure people are not disadvantaged or treated unfairly by The Fund. For example, any application process should be easy to access and to navigate.

Contact

130. If you have any queries about the content of this guidance or use of the funding, you can contact DWP: LA-PED.LAGRANTSPROJECTTEAM@DWP.GOV.UK

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Annex A: eligibility for cost of living and energy support

Detailed eligibility requirements for the Cost of Living Payments can be found at:

[Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living-payment)

Further details on the Energy Bills Support Scheme can be found at:

[Energy Bills Support Scheme explainer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/energy-bills-support-scheme-explainer)

Eligibility requirements for the Council Tax Rebate and information on the associated £144m Discretionary Fund can be found at:

[The council tax rebate 2022-23 – billing authority guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/council-tax-rebate-2022-23-billing-authority-guidance)

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Annex B: data share field list



2022-04-19 LWP
Data Share Field De

This document will be updated to include information regarding the additional data share of those who are only in receipt of Housing Benefit only when the details are confirmed.

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