

# Poverty Panel Meeting 18 March 2024

## Briefing Paper: Household Support Fund



### 1.0 Background

The Household Support Fund (HSF) has been in place since 1 October 2021 when it was announced that funding would be made available to provide help with the global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living.

HSF schemes have been delivered under a Devon wide framework agreed by Devon County Council (DCC) and other Devon districts who meet on a regular basis to discuss deployment of the fund. This ensures that we are all approaching administering the scheme in the same way, whilst allowing for local needs based on the demographics of each area.

We are currently under our fourth HSF scheme that covers the period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

At the Cabinet meeting on 29 March 2023 members agreed the policy to administer the £631,549.00 allocated to East Devon District Council.

### 2.0 Deployment of the Fund

As agreed with DCC and the Devon Local Authorities group the fund for 2023/24 was separated into two periods;

- For the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 £284,188 (45%)
- For the period 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024 £347,341 (55%)

#### 01 April 2023 to 30 September 2023

The fund is used to provide targeted support and for open applications.

Benefit records were used to identify all residents in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Reduction (CTR) to receive a one-off payment of £150.00, provided they had not already received a cost-of-living payment from the government.

1364 residents were targeted for the £150 support with 1157 (84.82%) making an application and receiving the payment a total of £173,550.00.

Follow up calls were made to residents who did not make an application. Officer support provided by Customer Services and the Benefits team was put into place for those residents who were not able to complete their on-line application themselves.

The open applications process allowed for any residents who we had not targeted a payment to. This was necessary as not all residents who would be entitled to HB or CTR have made a claim for one of these benefits.

For this period 590 applications were made with a total of £106,352.28 awarded.

Total awarded under scheme for period April to September - **£279,902.28.**

Remaining £4,285.72 carried forward to be used for October to March allocation.

Period 1 October 2024 to 32 March 2024

The fund was again used for targeted support and open applications.

The policy was updated to reflect the groups that were being targeted.

- A payment of £350 for any household with one of the monitored groups\*\* present in receipt of HB and/or CTR and property is EPC rated E or below.
- A payment of £300 for any household with one of the monitored groups present in receipt of HB and/or CTR.
- A payment of £180 for any household in receipt of HB or receiving CTR in income band 1.

\*\* Monitored groups include households where children, residents receiving a disability payment, carers and previous serving members of the armed forces are resident in the household.

1010 households from the above groups have received a letter advising them they can receive a payment.

To date £127,360.00 has been claimed. We are still receiving applications and are in the process of making payments. Follow up calls will be made as part of normal practice to ensure that as many as residents as possible receive their award.

From the 1 October 2023 to 07 March 2024 631 households totalling £114,150.40 were made from open applications.

Total spend to 07 March 2024 = £241,500.40

Remaining budget - £105,840.60.

We anticipate all funding will be used by 31 March 2024.

Our direct application process remains open as we still have our cost-of-living hardship funds available.

Payments for targeted support have been and will continue to be made by BACs or by Post Office vouchers.

### 3.0 Make-up of awards

The following table shows the reasons for awards being made when a resident has made a claim for support through the open application process.

	<b>Food</b>	<b>Energy &amp; Water</b>	<b>Essentials linked to Energy &amp; Water</b>	<b>Wider Essentials</b>	<b>Housing Costs</b>
<b>Spend</b>	£143,833.00	£16,133.16	£28,708.04	£31,065.44	£763.04
<b>Volumes</b>	941	175	35	68	2

### 4.0 Future Support

In the 2024 Spring Budget the chancellor announced a further 6 months of Household Support Fund.

DCC are still awaiting details of the funding and are therefore unable to provide confirmation of the amounts that we will be given to administer. It is expected that Devon Local Authorities will be given approximately 40% of the funding to administer to their residents.

How the fund will be administered will depend on any criteria placed on the funding by central government. If there are no changes then it is likely that previous frameworks will apply to the fifth round of funding.

Further details of the allocations that EDDC will receive and the criteria for administering this support will be provided once received.

### 5.0 Other Considerations

We received £63,516 from Devon County Council to help low-income households through their Economic Vulnerability Fund. This funding must be spent by 31 March 2024. This funding is being used to support the 349 residents who did not get a government cost of living payment or a payment from our HSF. These residents will receive a £180.00 to ensure that this funding is supporting East Devon's residents.

The future of the Household Support Fund beyond the end of September 2024 is currently unknown. Future announcements will largely depend on the political landscape and whether there will be an easing of the current cost of living crisis.

EDDC have their own cost of living hardship fund which we are currently looking at deploying in a pro-active way in conjuncture with Private Sector Housing. This pilot project is still in it's very early days but seeks to help low-income households living in accommodation that is sub-standard, e.g. suffering from damp and mould, by way of providing funding for improvements that are not able to be funded by other grants available.

We are also currently working with Devon Communities Together to look at how we can reach households who we are not currently engaging with, or who do not know of the financial support available.

We also continue to work with the voluntary sector to ensure that our residents are making the most of the opportunities available that have been set up to support them within their local communities.

## **6.0 Summary**

As can be seen there are several ways in which EDDC supports their residents and whilst government funding beyond September 2024 is uncertain, we will continue to work towards accessing other means of support.

Once details of the fifth HSF are received, we will bring a report to Cabinet proposing how this funding could be deployed.