



**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
REPORT TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**3 May 2022**

**Report of the Director of Public Health**

**Household Support Fund Grant Extension– 1 April to 30 September 2022**

**1. Divisions Affected**

1.1 County wide

**2. Key Decision**

2.1 This is a key decision due to the budget for the function concerned (this is currently defined as £500,000) and it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral areas in the County.

**3. Purpose**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the outline spending plans for Derbyshire County Council's allocation of the Household Support Fund Grant Extension of £5.4m. The report also seeks permission for the delegation of authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Children's Services. This will allow the Council to respond flexibly and effectively to any challenges, risks and opportunities that occur during the grant period and maintain our ability to swiftly distribute funds to vulnerable residents.

**4. Information and Analysis**

4.1 On 23 March 2022, the government announced in the Spring Statement that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.

- 4.2 Draft notification of Derbyshire's allocation of the funds and clarifying guidance relating to the Household Support Fund grant extension was received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 1 April 2022 (with final notification being received on 20 April 2022). The Council was required to provide an indicative delivery plan to the DWP by Friday 29 April 2022 indicating how it will distribute the grant and as the extension of the grant has been widely publicised by the Government. Therefore, it has not been possible for the normal decision-making protocols via Cabinet to take place and an Urgent Decision is requested to be made by the Leader to enable the Council to distribute the grant to households within the grant period, avoid an underspend and alleviate hardship for households. It is important that the distribution plans covered in this report commence as soon as possible and seeking a decision via Cabinet would delay this for a number of weeks and would put households in Derbyshire at a disadvantage. The grant covers the period 1 April to 30 September 2022.
- 4.3 Derbyshire County Council's allocation is £5,404,080.90. Local authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the accompanying grant determination and guidance.
- 4.4 The DWP is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer the scheme and provide assistance to households most in need. It is important to stress this covers a wide range of low-income households in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, and other low-income households, particularly those who cannot increase their income through work, to prevent escalation of problems.
- 4.5 Although this is an extension to the original HSF, authorities are not allowed to carry forward any underspends from the previous HSF which ended on the 31 March 2022. This funding extension covers the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 and funds must be spent or committed before the end of the grant period and cannot be held over for future use.

### **Grant Eligibility and Usage**

- 4.6 There are some changes in the eligibility requirements of the grant extension compared to those of the previous scheme which saw 50% of the fund ringfenced for families with children. The guidance for the new fund states local authorities should develop a 'local eligibility framework and approach' and target their support within the scope of the conditions set out below:
- at least one third of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support households with children,
  - at least one third of the total funding will be ring fenced to support pensioners,
  - up to one third of the total funding to other households genuinely in need of support.

Eligibility may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits.

- 4.7 The Authority has to ensure that the grant is primarily allocated to provide support to households with the costs of food, energy (for heating, lighting and cooking), water (for household purposes, including sewerage) and other essential living needs in accordance with the scheme guidance. In exceptional circumstances of genuine emergency and where other existing schemes do not apply, the Authority may allocate grant funds to support with housing costs as set out in the Scheme guidance.
- 4.8 For the purpose of this grant (and without prejudice to other schemes):
- The definition of a household with a child is a household containing any person:
    - who will be under the age of 19 as at 30 September 2022 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.
  - Where an eligible child lives on his or her own, they are a household that includes a child covered in the one third allocation for households with children.
  - The definition of a household with a pensioner is any household containing any person:
    - who has reached state pension age by 30 September 2022 (and no eligible children as defined above are resident)
- 4.9 Households which include a person aged 19 to 25 with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and/or care leavers may still be eligible for grant support however that support falls within the one third allocation to other households (without children or pensioners).

The guidance sets out that:

- Authorities can 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). Authorities have the local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those most in need.
- County councils must work together with District/ Borough councils and other third sector organisations to ensure the funding meets its objectives by identifying those most in need.
- Authorities can allocate a reasonable amount of the funds for administration costs, incurred in administering the fund. These include staffing costs, advertising, and publicity to raise awareness of the scheme, web page design, printing of application forms and small IT changes to facilitate process design or reporting.

## Reporting Requirements

- 4.10 An interim Management Information (MI) return is required to be submitted to the DWP by 22 July 2022 for spend for the period 01 April 2022 to 30 June 2022. The interim MI return will be used to determine eligible spend to 30 June 2022 and an interim grant payment will be made for this period when the information in the return has been verified.
- 4.11 A final MI return, showing total spend from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022, is required to be submitted to the DWP by 21 October 2022. The final MI return will be used to determine total eligible spend to 30 September 2022 and a final grant payment will be made for this period when the information in the return has been verified.
- 4.12 The full scheme guidance can be found in Appendix 2

## 5. Proposed Use of Funds Summary

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Council utilises a varied and mixed approach to distributing the grant to help ensure the funds reach a wide range of households needing financial support, including those who may not currently be claiming welfare benefits. Detailed HSF eligibility criteria based on the HSF grant guidance will be published on the DCC website.
- 5.2 The DWP have confirmed that after submitting the initial delivery plan authorities may review and make changes to these plans to respond to challenges and opportunities they face during the grant period. It is therefore recommended that spending of the fund is kept under close review to enable the Council to take a flexible and pragmatic approach to administering the funds, taking into consideration factors such as demand, capacity, and budget.
- 5.3 Overview – proposed allocation of funds breakdown.

The table below sets out the proposed split of the fund via the distribution elements and household types. Detail of each proposed distribution element is set out in sections 6 to 8

Household Support Fund Allocation	Derbyshire Discretionary Fund	District/ borough Councils (homelessness prevention)	Childrens services grants & Care Leavers	Food Support Vouchers	Third sector grants	Energy support to Pensioners & ASCH social care clients
Funds intended for households with children	400,000	0	208,000	1,237,500	0	0

<b>Funds intended for pensioners</b>	0	0	0	0	150,000	1,708,713
<b>Funds intended for other adult households</b>	600,000	900,000	2,000	0	50,000	118,787
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>900,000</b>	<b>210,000</b>	<b>1,237,500</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>1,827,500</b>
<b>Admin Costs</b>	£30,000					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,405,000</b>					

#### 5.4 Overall fund division between adult households and households with children

<b>Household split</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total funds</b>
Total ringfenced for households with children	34.1%	<b>1,845,500</b>
Total ringfenced for Pensioners	34.4%	<b>1,858,713</b>
Total proposed for other households	31%	<b>1,670,788</b>
Administration	0.5%	<b>£30,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£5,405,001</b>

#### 5.5 Administration Costs - £30,000 from HSF, £168,500 from Contain Outbreak Management Funds

To administer this grant in the swiftest possible timeframe, the Council will need to retain and/or recruit agency staff to increase capacity to deliver the distribution plans. However, administration costs will be kept to the absolute minimum to ensure as much of the grant as possible is distributed to vulnerable residents.

To deliver the enhanced provision via the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF), the Council will incur staffing costs of £138,500. It is proposed that these are met by utilising Contain Outbreak Management Funds, as was done for the first operation of the Household Support Fund. Agency staff who have already been trained will be retained and those that have moved on to other work will be replaced.

To deliver the grocery vouchers, energy support grants, and children's professionals grants the current team of agency staff who were recruited to deliver the first HSF would need to be retained to provide sufficient capacity. It is estimated that this would cost £60,000. It is proposed that the half of this cost (arising from the work supporting the energy support vouchers to pensioners and Adult Social Care clients) is met from Contain funding, with the other half (related to Children's elements) funded from the HSF grant.

## **6. Households with Children – Detailed Proposals - £1,845,500**

### **6.1 Grants Allocated via Childrens Professionals - £200,000**

The Distribution Plans for the first Household Support Fund award (October 2021 to March 2022) saw a route developed whereby Children’s Services Early Help and Safeguarding staff and partner agencies who work predominately with families and children, such as schools and nurseries, were able to utilise their professional knowledge and relationships to identify families facing hardship and assess them for grant payments from the fund. Feedback from professionals and families who have accessed funds via the route has been overwhelmingly positive, with many case examples shared to evidence how the support made a significant difference to families.

It is recommended that this route is re-opened for the period April to September 2022. Following on from the terms of the earlier scheme, it is proposed that each household is able to access two payments from the fund within the period, either via the Childrens Professionals route or via the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF) team (see 7.1). The value of payments would also align with support accessed via DDF: £64 for the first adult in the household and £20 for a partner and for each child in the household.

Eligibility for the first round of grants was based on presenting financial need rather than benefit entitlement or a certain income level. This offered a route for families in work but on a low income and others who were not eligible for other support schemes to access financial help. It is recommended that this approach continues as HSF scheme guidance encourages authorities to consider those who may be over the threshold for other schemes but who still may be facing hardship due to the current economic climate.

The proportion of funds allocated to this route would be £0.200m. This amount is based on the total spend of the previous grants assessed by Childrens Professionals (£185k) and considers that the period in which the second round of grants would be available would be a few weeks longer than the initial scheme, due to the fact systems and processes have already been developed so the route could be re-opened with little delay.

### **6.2 Care Leavers - £10,000**

The Care Leavers Team already have mechanisms in place to distribute funds to care leavers via vouchers, bank transfers and, in exceptional circumstances, cash payments. As part of the initial Household Support Fund distribution plans, approx. £18,000 was distributed via the Care Leavers Team to care leavers aged up to 24 who were experiencing financial hardship over the winter.

The Care Leavers Team report that having access to additional funds from the Household Support Fund in addition to their usual crisis budget enabled them to respond flexibly to situations and helped to maintain the wellbeing of care leavers who needed financial and practical support.

It is recommended that a further £10,000 is allocated to the Care Leavers team for the period April to September 2022 to enable them to support young care leavers through energy price rises and other financial challenges they may face in the coming months.

It should be noted that Care Leavers aged 19 and over will be classed as adult households under the grant terms. It is estimated that around 80% of the £10,000 will be allocated to Care Leavers under 19.

### 6.3 Summer Food Support Voucher June 2022 - £1,237,500

The Distribution Plans for the first Household Support Fund saw an £80 grocery voucher issued in February 2022 as a one-off 'winter hardship payment' to approx. 27,500 families with children eligible for benefit-related free school meals in schools and further educational colleges; care leavers (up to age 21); and children in early years settings (who qualify for the Early Years Pupil Premium with qualifying benefits and Early Years 2-Year-Old with qualifying benefits). 90% of vouchers distributed in February were redeemed and spent.

It is proposed that the new HSF funding is used to provide a further grocery voucher with a proposed value of £50 to this cohort in late June 2022 as a 'summer support payment'. Based on a 90% redemption rate, this would cost £1,237,500 to deliver vouchers to 27,500 eligible children/young people.

June is proposed due to the practicalities of delivering the scheme. Data and up-to-date parent contact details must be collected from schools and collecting this in late May/early June will ensure schools are not burdened with this as they are working to close the school year in the final weeks of term. This time scale would also allow schools a short window of time to report issues, such as parents not receiving vouchers due to incorrect contact details being provided before they break up for summer.

Families and care leavers who would receive grocery vouchers in June would still be able to access a grant payment via Children's Professionals or the DDF if they face financial hardship before and after June, including during the summer holidays.

Voucher payments would be titled as Summer Food Support Payments. Recipients would also receive information signposting them to other sources of financial support that they could also access at other periods of financial hardship, including school holidays. The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme will also be running over the summer holidays.

#### 6.4 Derbyshire Discretionary Fund - £400k

Please see section 8.1 for further details. £400k of the overall funds allocated via the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund is expected to be awarded to families with children.

### 7. Pensioner Households – Detailed Proposals - £1,858,713

#### 7.1 Energy Support Grant Payments to Pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support and Adult Social Care Clients with a nil or tapered Co-funding Contribution - £1,827,500.

Across Derbyshire there are approximately 21,402 pensioners who are in receipt of full or partial Council Tax Support (CTS) due to a low income, which is claimed via their local District or Borough Council. In addition, there are currently 3,139 Adult Social Care clients who do not pay a contribution to their home care costs, or who pay a partial contribution, due to being on a low income.

It is proposed that these 24,540 residents are offered a cash 'energy support grant' payment of £100. The figure of £100 is based on an expected 75% take up rate, i.e. the allocated funds (£1,827,500) if claimed by approximately 18,400 of those eligible. There will be some overlap of cohorts but until data matching is undertaken the extent of this is not clear.

Local District and Borough Council's hold records of all pensioners receiving CTS. It is proposed that the Council works with lower tier authority partners to develop a system where pensioners on their registers are contacted by their local district/borough council and invited to apply for the grant. Initial discussions with District and Borough partners have been positive and they have indicated that they are willing to support a scheme of this nature.

The details of this system would need to be worked through with partners, but it is recommended that this option is pursued as a realistic method of achieving the grant terms to distribute 33% of the funds to pensioners. In addition, the sign-up process would offer pensioners a Welfare Benefit Check to promote access to Pension Credit, which remains an 'under-claimed' benefit according to national Department for Work and Pensions data.

The ASCH social care clients would also be contacted in a similar way, using records held by the Client Financial Services Team. It should be noted that approximately 1600 of the ASCH social care clients are under 65 so this proportion of the spend would be allocated to 'other households' as set out in 5.3.

Agency staff recruited to deliver the Children's grants and grocery vouchers from April to September could be utilised to support with administering energy support grants, with additional agency staff recruited on a more short-term basis if required.

7.2 Age UK Derby and Derbyshire and Derbyshire Carers Association  
£0.200m

Public Health have an existing service level agreement in place for 2022-23 with Derbyshire Carers Association and Age UK Derby and Derbyshire to identify vulnerable and hard to reach pensioners and unpaid carers who are facing financial and/or emotional hardship and, if eligible, awarding grant funding to them.

It is proposed that a further £0.100m each is directed to Age UK and Derbyshire Carers to enhance the level of support available by building on the partnerships in place, to reach vulnerable households who might otherwise not be connected to financial assistance to help with cost of living pressures. It is estimated that approximately half of the carers Derbyshire Carers Association would award grants to would be under pension age and therefore £50,000 of this spend would fall into the 'other households' category. This is set out in 5.3.

This option would utilise the existing systems and eligibility criteria both organisations have in place to deliver this programme, which would bring added benefits in terms of minimising the administration costs incurred as part of HSF distribution plans.

As part of this work, Age UK and Derbyshire Carers would also be encouraged to support eligible pensioners and any eligible carers/cared for to apply the Energy Support Grant.

**8. Support for other / non specified groups – Detailed Proposals -  
£1,670,788**

8.1 Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF) Household Support Fund-  
£1,000,000

It is recommended that £1,000,000 is allocated to DDF to enhance the provision of support to residents with the costs of food, energy, and essential living costs. This figure would be added to the DDF's existing budget for the April – September period. Based on existing data it is anticipated that over 40% of this would be allocated to families with children who apply directly to the fund, as set out in 5.3. The expected 40% awarded to families is included in the 34.1% of the total fund allocated to families.

As undertaken for the first round of HSF funding, the scope of the DDF scheme would be enhanced:

- To make up to two Household Support Fund grant payments per household over the period April to the end of September 2022 from this fund. (The DDF policy currently contains a limit of a maximum three Emergency Cash Payments in any twelve-month period and these two HSF payments would be in addition to this and offered before Emergency Cash Payments.)

- To continue to pay the increased the amount of £64 for the main applicant and £20 for each affected household member for both Household Support Fund grants and standard Emergency Cash Payments (ECP). (The amount of an ECP was increased from £54 to £64 when the first Household Support Fund distribution plans were agreed, with the amount awarded for each affected household member increased from to £10 to £20).

The two HSF payments and the proposed award amounts set out above would align with grants provided via Children's Professionals. Systems developed as part of the first HSF would be used to carry out checks and cross reference applications to ensure households do not receive more than two HSF grants in the period. Where a household has already accessed two HSF payments and applies for further support, they would be assessed for an Emergency Cash Payment via the DDF Team.

The fund would be promoted and referred to as the Household Support Fund. This will help ensure that any promotion is separated from the DDF offer and would allow the time-limited availability of the fund to be made clear. The workings of DDF will revert to the original policy in terms of payment amount and frequency from 30 September 2022, should no further funding be awarded.

DDF already has a robust system for receiving and processing claims in place and its eligibility criteria and scope closely match that of the Household Support Fund, in that eligibility may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits. It is recommended that the existing DDF processes and eligibility criteria are utilised when claims are made to the Household Support Fund. The DDF scheme has existing reporting mechanisms which can be used to meet DWP MI reporting requirements, including the breakdown between households with children and adult households. DDF also has established complaints and review processes in place.

The Council will make every effort to ensure people facing financial hardship are aware of the fund whilst being clear on eligibility criteria to manage expectations. Promotion methods can include information on the Council's website and social media channels, internal and external newsletters and by utilising existing links with partner agencies and elected members. This approach can be kept under review and promotion stepped up if needed based on Call Derbyshire and the DDF capacity / the number of claims.

## 8.2 Awarding Funds to District and Borough Councils - £0.900m

The scope of the Household Support Fund extends to support with emergency housing and Council Tax support, where households are not eligible for existing housing support schemes and/or where residents are facing enforcement action.

As part of the distribution plans for the first Household Support Fund grant, £1.7m was distributed to district and borough partners to enable them to address these issues. District and Borough partners each produced proposals on how they could utilise the funds within the scheme guidance, and this was confirmed

by means of service level agreements. Feedback and case studies from district and borough partners demonstrated that they were able to utilise the funds to support those in crisis situations and facing enforcement action, including preventing residents from being made homeless.

It is recommended that £0.900m from the extended Household Support Fund is distributed to the eight district and borough Councils in Derbyshire to enable their housing teams to support those facing housing related financial difficulty between April and September 2022. It is proposed that this will include additional funds for awarding emergency financial support to Derbyshire residents who don't qualify for Discretionary Housing Payments but who are facing exceptional housing related financial pressure and those facing enforcement action due to rent or Council Tax arrears.

The figure of £900k is just over half the amount allocated to district and borough partners as part of the earlier HSF scheme. This is due to the fact the new grant terms require at least a third of the fund to be distributed to pensioners, meaning less funds are available for other elements.

It is proposed that £0.450m of the £0.900m is split equally between the eight districts. The other £0.50m would be split utilising the modelling tool prepared by the Council's Policy and Research Division based on 2019 indices of multiple deprivation and population numbers.

<b>District</b>	<b>Proposed funding</b>
Amber Valley	126,063
Bolsover	114,456
Chesterfield	129,091
Derbyshire Dales	83,166
Erewash	119,839
High Peak	118,157
North East Derbyshire	108,063
South Derbyshire	101,166
<b>Total</b>	<b>900,000</b>

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment**

The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken for the first HSF grant will be updated to ensure that due regard is given to the impact that the proposed arrangements might have on all protected groups of people in Derbyshire. This will enable the identification of any groups of people who may be adversely affected by the proposed distribution of HSF grant, and this will be mitigated through targeted communications and work with community partner organisations.

## **10. Consultation**

In forming these proposals, significant consultation has been undertaken between departments: Children's Services, Public Health, and Corporate Services and Transformation (including Client Financial Services in relation to Adult Social Care clients). In addition, consultation has been undertaken with external partners such as district and borough Councils and other third sector partners. Benchmarking and liaison with other Authorities has been undertaken to understand more about their approach to distribution of the fund.

## **11. Conclusion**

A blended approach, as set out above, provides the best opportunity to reach a wide range of families and households in Derbyshire facing financial hardship arising from cost-of-living pressures and in line with the requirements of the DWP funding.

All the proposed elements align with the scope and criteria of the Household Support Fund and make the best use of existing systems such as DDF and district and borough Housing Teams.

The approach, which combines a direct application process as well as targeted support, will satisfy the directions of the DWP that people facing hardship should be able to apply to the fund. Distributing vouchers to those eligible benefit-related free school meals, care leavers aged under 21 and those in receipt of the Early Years Pupil Premium or Early Years 2 Year Old with qualifying benefits, will help make sure funds are allocated to a cohort likely to be affected by the ongoing impact of the loss of the Universal Credit uplift and increases to the cost of living.

The proposed split between families with children, pensioners and other households is well balanced, with approximately a third allocated to each, which is within the scope of the scheme. However, it is recommended that all elements of the scheme remain under close review and if significant demand, or lack of demand, is seen in particular areas then the costings can be adjusted accordingly. It is recommended that a Household Support Fund Steering Group, made up of key officers and partners, meet regularly to review how the fund is being utilised in real time, ensure a timely response to presenting need of Derbyshire residents and address any challenges.

## **12. Alternative Options Considered**

Previous DWP grants have been granted with guidance requiring Authorities to allocate the vast majority funds via vouchers to families and young people eligible for benefit-related free school meals over the school holidays. A number of other local authorities across the country are continuing this approach with plans to use the majority of their Household Support Fund allocation in this way. However, as the fund covers a wider cohort of vulnerable households who would otherwise struggle to buy food, pay essential utility bills, or meet other essential living costs than previous grants, including those not eligible for welfare benefits,

in Derbyshire, it was felt that a blended range methods would be more effective, while maintaining a smaller element of vouchers to this group of vulnerable families in June 2022 as a 'summer food support payment'.

As the Housing Support Fund is paid in arrears on the submission of an MI return to the DWP, there is the option for the Council not to take up the funds and opt out of the funding. However, this is not considered to be an option because it would be a disservice to vulnerable households and families in Derbyshire who are likely to be facing significant financial pressure. It may also put pressure on the Council's social care services further down the line if families with children, pensioner households and other adult households reach crisis due to their financial circumstances. In addition, not utilising the funds would deny the Derbyshire economy and local businesses the funds.

### **13. Implications**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

### **14. Appendices**

- 14.1 Appendix 1- Implications.  
14.2 Appendix 2 - Household Support Fund Extension April – Sept 2022 – scheme guidance  
14.3 Appendix 3 – Risk management assessment

### **15. Background Papers**

Urgent Decision taken by Managing Executive Director 11.11.2021 noted by cabinet 13.1.2022

[Decision - HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND GRANT - Modern Council \(derbyshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/Decision-HOUSEHOLD-SUPPORT-FUND-GRANT-Modern-Council)

### **16. Call-in**

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report?  
Yes

- 16.1 Councillor Tony Kemp, Chair of Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – People has:  
(a) approved the waiver of the call in period due to the urgent nature of the decision required; he has agreed the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency; and  
(b) agreed the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred and can be taken without the notice of key decision having first been published.

## 17. Recommendation(s)

That the Leader:

- a) makes an urgent decision to approve the plans for a blended approach to distribute the Household Support Fund Extension as set out in this report.
- b) delegates authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Children's Services, to approve amendments and changes to plans for distributing the Household Support Fund Extension in line with the overall scheme eligibility requirements.

## 18. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 18.1 Many Derbyshire residents will face financial hardship over the next few months particularly those including children and pensioners, who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs. It is therefore important that the Council distributes the funds in a wide-reaching manner to support vulnerable households and takes the opportunity to boost the Derbyshire economy.
- 18.2 Failing to distribute the funds to vulnerable households facing financial pressure may cause residents to enter crisis, which may put pressure on Council services further down the line.
- 18.3 The blended approach proposed, which combines a direct application process as well as targeted support, will help reach a range of vulnerable people and make it less likely for people to fall through the gaps.
- 18.4 To allow the Council to respond flexibly and effectively to any challenges, risks and opportunities that occur during the grant period and maintain our ability to swiftly distribute funds to vulnerable residents.

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## Implications

### 1. Financial

- 1.1 The Childrens Services and Adult Social Care and Health revenue budgets will be adjusted to reflect this new ring-fenced grant and it will be monitored through the usual financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.
- 1.2 Grants awarded to third-party organisations will be awarded and monitored through the usual financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.
- 1.3 The grant allocation of £5.4m to the Council has been issued as a ring-fenced Section 31 grant. The grant determination notice states that the purpose of the grant is to provide support to certain local authorities in England for expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in accordance with the Grant Conditions 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.
- 1.4 Details of the proposed use of the funds and the allocations for the proposed schemes are set out in Sections 5 – 8 above.
- 1.5 The grant determination notice sets out eligible expenditure for the scheme and this includes reasonable administrative costs which include, for example, staff costs, advertising and publicity and IT changes. The estimated staffing costs have been set out in section 2 above.
- 1.6 The Council must ensure that:
  - at least 33.33% of the grant is allocated to support households that include:
    - a person who will be under the age of 19 as at 30 September 2022, or
    - a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit is paid or free school meals are provided during the grant period;
  - at least 33.33% of the grant is allocated to support households that include a person who has reached state pension age by 30 September 2022;
  - up to 33.33% of the grant is used to assist other households;
  - the grant is primarily allocated to support with the costs of food, energy (for heating, lighting and cooking), water (for household purposes, including sewerage) and other essential living needs in accordance with the Scheme guidance.

In exceptional circumstances of genuine emergency, the Authority may allocate grant funds to support with housing costs as set out in the Scheme guidance.

## **2. Legal**

- 2.1 Grants awarded to third-party organisations will be awarded and monitored through the usual financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.
- 2.2 Improvement and Scrutiny Procedure Rules State: “13(6) The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by Cabinet is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council’s or the public interest. All reports recommending that decisions be taken should say whether or not it is proposed that call-in be waived. The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public, shall state whether in the opinion of the decision-making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in. The Chairman of the appropriate Improvement and Scrutiny Committee should agree both the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency
- 2.3 In cases of special urgency, a key decision can be taken without the requisite notice having been given if the decision maker has obtained agreement from the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee Chairman (and in his/her absence the chairman of the Council or in her or his absence the vice-chairman of the Council) that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

## **3. Human Resources**

- 3.1 Redeployment of existing staff, recruitment of new agency staff as appropriate and the retention of existing agency staff employed to deliver the HSF Phase 1 programme will be utilised to increase the capacity of the DDF Team, Call Derbyshire and Early Help Teams. This will need to be managed at pace with the goal of ensuring DDF is fully staffed and training completed by end May 2022. This approach mitigates the risks and delays that would be faced by recruiting additional directly employed staff on short term contracts to September 2022. Current DDF management will manage demand for the extended HSF scheme as part of business as usual.
- 3.2 The Council has an agreement with a broker – Comensura which simplifies the way agency workers are hired. Instead of directly contacting numerous agencies we only need to contact one broker (Comensura) who will contact all relevant agencies on our behalf. To encourage maximum engagement from suppliers, orders should be placed on C-Net, by the recruiting manager. Roles and pay rates are usually aligned to Council roles (and JPPs) to ensure we engage agency workers with the appropriate skills and comply with agency worker regulations. The flexible resource team will support where market rates demand a negotiation of pay rate to the worker and/or the type of worker is difficult to source.

## **4. Information Technology**

- 4.1 No large-scale IT changes are required to administer the fund.
- 4.2 A new online form will be produced for claims to the DDF/Household Support Fund. This will be managed by the eContent Team and Channel Shift Team and may utilise the new Granicus CRM system. This will create legacy benefits for the Council for the future operation of DDF.
- 4.3 Processes relating to connections between Children's Professionals HSF applications and DDF to award funds will be managed using existing programs such as Microsoft and Mosaic.
- 4.3 Processes related to delivering Energy Support Vouchers for pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support and ASCH Social Care clients will be developed in partnership with district and borough partners, and the Council's Client Financial Services Team and may utilise existing MS365 capabilities or the new Granicus CRM system.

## **5. Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 The recommendations set out in this report has been fully considered in relation to equality. Given the changes in eligibility requirements, the HSF Equality Impact Assessment is being updated to ensure that due regard is given to the impact that the proposed arrangements might have on all protected groups of people in Derbyshire. This will enable the identification of any groups of people who may be adversely affected by the proposed distribution of HSF grant and in some cases, this will be mitigated through third sector grant awards.

## **6. Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 6.1 One of the aims of Vision Derbyshire is to work collaboratively with district and borough councils. To do that well, it's important for the Council to have efficient and effective processes to both establish our lead role and to set up any collaborations with minimal disruption to efficiency.
- 6.2 The pandemic has had a significant impact on communities and key sectors of the economy. The Council is working with its partners to support community recovery across all areas of the county, ensuring equality of access to support.
- 6.3 This programme will address one of the Council's key priorities which is to provide effective early help for individuals and communities.

**7. Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)**

- 7.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

**Household Support Fund Extension April -Sept 2022 Guidance**



FINAL Guidance -  
Household Support

## Risk Management Assessment

Risk	Proposed mitigation
<p>If a decision was taken to revert to using the HSF to provide grocery vouchers to families with children eligible for benefit related FSM to cover all school holidays, this may create dependency and ongoing expectation that DCC will do this in all holidays. The new pensioner element means that funds are not available to do this for all holidays in the period (May half term and the summer holidays).</p>	<p>This group of vulnerable families will receive a £50 food voucher in June 2022. Families eligible for FSM will also be able to access other elements of the fund via Childrens Professional grants, district and borough councils and DDF at other times during grant period, including school holidays. This will include promotion of other schemes such as the HAF programme which is targeted at families eligible for benefit related FSM during the Easter and Summer holidays 2022. Children’s Professionals will be encouraged to consider families’ needs over the summer in terms of the timing of submitting grant applications.</p>
<p>Not providing grocery vouchers to children eligible for benefit related FSM over holiday periods may risk reputational damage to the Council if other neighbouring local authorities use HSF to continue to fund these. In addition, there is a risk of reputational damage from offering a £50 voucher per eligible child because vouchers offered as part of the first HSF in February were £80 per eligible child.</p>	<p>Strategically targeting funding over the grant period, this group of vulnerable families will receive a £50 food voucher in June 2022. Eligible families will also be able to access other elements of the fund via Childrens Professionals Grants, DDF, and district and borough councils at other times during grant period. The HAF scheme will also be available in the summer holidays. These alternative routes will be promoted to parents who receive the vouchers via communications via schools and on the council website. It will be made clear on the website that the grant terms stipulate 33% of the fund must be distributed to pensioners and that this is a new stipulation the Council has had to deliver – to explain why less funding is specifically directed at families with children.</p>

<p>Not collecting the correct management information data to enable the Council to retrospectively claim the funds from DWP, given that the grant is paid in arrears.</p>	<p>Officers will ensure careful monitoring of funds the Council distributes. Funding agreements / Service Level Agreements will be put in place with third parties – districts and boroughs and CVS organisations. These measures worked efficiently with the first HSF.</p>
<p>Being unable to distribute all available funds to residents (£5.4m) in the timescale allowed to 30/9/2022.</p>	<p>Officers are working with partners and corporately across the council to create a range of accessible routes for residents to access the funds. Additional staff are also being recruited via agency and/or redeployment to increase capacity of existing services including DDF, Call Derbyshire and Early Help and Safeguarding Teams, to help ensure funds can be distributed within the timescale. A significant amount of the funds will be utilised for targeted direct awards for key vulnerable groups Council officers will regularly review the grant spend with partners and finance.</p>
<p>Take up for both grocery vouchers (5.3) and energy grants (6.1) exceed their expected take up of 90% and 75% respectively and risk an overspend.</p>	<p>93% take up/redemption of grocery vouchers was achieved in February 2022 after significant work was undertaken to contact parents who had not redeemed their voucher (after a month) to encourage them to take it up. With previous schemes, where such a push had not been undertaken, a redemption rate of 85% had been achieved.</p> <p>To mitigate the risk of overspend, the rate of uptake would be carefully monitored, and the scale of work undertaken to contact parents who had not cashed the voucher adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>It is hard to estimate how many pensioners/ASCH clients will take up the offer. Some of the risk will be mitigated by the fact some residents will be eligible via both eligibility criteria but would only receive one £100 grant payment. The overall budget will be monitored and other</p>

	<p>elements, such as grants via Childrens Professionals or Age UK/DCA, could be ceased before the end of the grant period if needed.</p>
<p>Communications about the availability of the fund do not reach some residents facing financial hardship.</p>	<p>Work will be carried out with professionals and organisations who work with hard-to-reach groups to promote the fund (BME Forum, financial inclusion groups etc). Information will be made available in different formats and on multiple channels. The Equality Impact will be updated to identify and respond to any other groups that may potentially be excluded. Funds provided to 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations will expand schemes already working to identify hard to reach pensioners and unpaid carers.</p>
<p>Council services could be overwhelmed by demand for support from residents facing financial hardship, especially given the short life span of the grant.</p>	<p>Demand under the first round of HSF funding did cause significant challenges for service delivery, in particular for Call Derbyshire and the DDF assessment team. Officers have engaged with a wide range of partners to increase the number of access points to the fund, make best use of existing capacity and optimise existing referral routes across the system. Initial work is underway to build an online application for residents to remove pressure from Call Derbyshire, although this in itself may lead to an increase in service demand. Communication about availability of the grant will be planned dependent on demand and capacity levels.</p>
<p>Demand may continue beyond the end of the funding provided by the government</p>	<p>Demand for DDF support has remained high after the end of the first allocation of HSF funding and before the second was announced. Communication from the Council to residents and partners will be clear about the scope of offer this additional support because of temporary government funding that ends on 30/9/22. Officers leading DDF work will plan for the impact of high demand and share</p>

	this with senior leaders in time for appropriate decisions to be made.
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