

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

Thursday, 7 December 2023

REPORT TITLE:	HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 4 (1 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024) UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the proposed spend of government's Household Support Fund (£6,098,690) for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, which is available to support those most in need with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials.

ALLOCATIONS PROPOSED TO POLICY & RESOURCES

1. Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the update progress of the local allocation of the Household Support Fund as outlined below:

Name	Organisation	HSF 4 Proposals
Wirral Household Support Fund - small grants programme	Various organisations	£ 1,300,000.00
Early Years food, bulk school pantries & essentials hampers (school holidays)	Neo Community	£ 1,300,000.00
School Emergency Food Pantries - fresh deliveries	Neo Community	£ 186,000.00
Additional Emergency Financial Support spend	Wirral Council	£ 200,000.00
Financial support with fuel (pre-paid meters)	Wirral Council via Fuel Bank	£ 700,000.00
Financial support with fuel (Energy and water debt) - direct debit customers	Wirral Council referrals from CAB & Energy Project Plus	£ 1,100,000.00
Crisis support with emergency heating	Energy Project Plus	£ 46,000.00
Crisis support with white goods	North Birkenhead Development Trust & St Vincent de Paul Society	£ 160,000.00
Housing Support Costs (Rent)	Wirral Council	£ 100,000.00
Food support for out of school activities	Holiday Activities and Food Support – Edsential CIC	£ 150,000.00

Housing Benefit Only Cohort	Wirral Council	£ 30,000.00
Care Leavers support - pantries and energy	Wirral Council / Neo Community	£ 67,600.00
Older person support / freeing up NHS beds	Age UK	£ 100,000.00
Childrens services support for vulnerable families	Wirral Council	£ 500,000.00
Administration costs	Wirral Council and Partners	£ 150,000.00
Total Award		£ 6,093,600.00
Balance		£ 6,090.00

HOUSING SUPPORT FUND 4 - SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Wirral Household Support Fund – small grants programme (£1,300,000)

This in the past has included community-based food and welfare support groups, including many that played a key role supporting residents through the pandemic, Applications were accepted for up to £20,000 (plus up to £2,000 administration costs) to help ensure that food and essential items are available to those most in need in their local communities.

It was proposed to hold two rounds of bidding cover the summer and winter periods. The summer period has now concluded, details of successful bids are shown below

Organisation / charity	Total	Areas of benefit
Equilibrium North West Reprieve Project	£20,000.00	All areas
Hype Merseyside - Vibrants Parks	£12,600.00	Birkenhead & Wallasey
The Oak Community Project at Christ the King Church	£18,700.00	Birkenhead, Bromborough & Wallasey
Eastham Community Church St Marys	£1,250.00	Eastham
The Positivitree - Send Support	£20,000.00	All areas
Tranmere Rovers in the Community	£20,000.00	All areas
Koala North West	£6,500.00	All areas
Involve North West	£19,750.00	All areas
Shaftesbury Youth Club	£18,900.00	All areas
Rotary E-Club of District 1070 - Coats4kids	£11,825.00	Greasby, Hoylake, West Kirby

Heart4Refugees	£21,000.00	All areas
Core Birkenhead	£10,500.00	All areas
WEB Merseyside	£19,950.00	All areas
WEB Merseyside - Men Too	£9,870.00	All areas
Rek41 CIC - Green Shop Food Provision	£15,120.00	Birkenhead & Prenton
Number 7	£21,000.00	All areas
Carrbridge Centre Ltd	£16,800.00	Woodchurch
Sandbrook Social Supermarket	£7,350.00	Moreton and surrounding area
Make It Happen Birkenhead	£15,000.00	Birkenhead & Prenton
D Hub 67 C.I.C.	£16,149.00	Birkenhead & Wallasey
Claremount Hub	£8,400.00	Wallasey
Prenton Tenants and Residents Association (PTRA)	£13,650.00	Prenton
Wirral Chinese Association	£16,800.00	All areas
THE CROWN COMMUNITY HUB LTD	£20,700.00	Wallasey & Seacombe
The Little Centre Beechwood	£10,500.00	Beechwood
Eastham/Delamere Community Centre	£10,500.00	Eastham & Bromborough
Jubilee Church Wirral	£9,980.00	Wallasey & surrounding area
Amy and Friends	£11,140.00	All areas
Wirral Youth Zone	£10,371.00	All areas
Wirral Change Limited	£21,000.00	All areas
Bridging the Wallasey Gap	£21,000.00	Wallasey & surrounding area
Gautby Road	£13,230.00	Bidston, Birkenhead, Tranmere & Claughton
Break the Mould	£10,500.00	Noctorum
Leasowe Play Youth & Community Association	£10,500.00	Leasowe
North Birkenhead Development Trust	£15,750.00	Birkenhead & surrounding
Glenavon Community Club	£20,000.00	All areas
Tomorrow's Women	£8,505.00	All areas
St Mary's Church Pastoral Care Initiative	£4,725.00	All areas
Christ the King	£4,872.00	South Wirral area
Rock Ferry Salvation Army Community	£5,330.00	Rock Ferry and surrounding

Church		area
Nightingales	£19,500.00	All areas
Neo Community	£18,900.00	All areas
Future Challenges	£10,000.00	All areas
Vale House Community Centre	£8,400.00	Wallasey and surrounding area

Small Grants Winter Scheme

The winter scheme was open for bids between the 30 October and the 13 November, the bids are in the process of being assessed.

Successful Bidders will have until the 15 March 2024 to spend their allocation and will be subject to the established audit requirements (submission of receipts, etc.), which is consistent with the monitoring of previous small grants programmes.

Details of the successful bids will be shared with councillors.

Early Years food, essential hampers during school holidays & Emergency School Food Pantries (£1,300,000)

Targeted support through the provision of food & essentials hampers will be provided to families eligible for 2 Year Funding/Early Years Pupil Premium (precursors to eligibility for Free School Meals when a child starts primary school).

Other local families with children under 5 who may need the same support will be signposted to their nearest Children's Centre to discuss applying.

Primary, secondary, special schools, leaving care provision and Sixth Form Colleges will be given a store of ambient items for the children to take home and use over the winter period. The project builds on the success of a similar scheme delivered in partnership with local charity Neo Community.

School Emergency Food Pantries Fresh Food Provision (£186,000)

Working with the Schools Pantries to provide 93 schools with £500 vouchers to allow them to purchase and provide additional items of fresh food to complement the existing offer of dry and long-life goods. These vouchers will be provided in instalments at a cost of £ 46,500 per quarter.

Emergency Support Fund (£200,000)

Transfer of monies to the council's Emergency Support Fund (ESF) to allow additional grants to be made. This existing fund administered by the council is accessible to all residents across the borough and provides a wide range of emergency support. Residents are signposted for support in addition to information provide within council publicity relating to cost-of-living support and on the council's website. This a fundamental ask of the government guidance as this scheme available and open to all.

Financial Support with Fuel and with Fuel & Water Debt (£1,800,000)

Vulnerable residents who are unable to pay for the fuel they need to heat and power their homes or are struggling to deal with fuel and water debt can apply for help in several ways:

Those with pre-payment meters can request a fuel voucher (gas and electric) from national charity, Fuelbank Foundation, via their local delivery partners Citizens Advice Wirral, Involve Northwest and Energy Projects Plus, as well as via the Emergency Financial Support Scheme (see below).

People who pay by direct debit can apply for help towards their fuel and water costs, which will be paid directly to their utility provider following an assessment and referral by Citizens Advice Wirral.

People struggling with fuel and water debt can request help to clear or reduce their debt from Citizens Advice Wirral and Energy Projects Plus.

People in crisis situations who are unable to repair or replace broken or obsolete heating and do not qualify for help under other programmes can apply to local charity Energy Projects Plus for help under the Crisis Support with heating scheme.

Energy Projects Plus (£46,000)

Capital funding for heating & plumbing appliance repair/replacement for vulnerable, low-income Wirral residents without recourse to such funding elsewhere, or who would be at a disadvantage if they were required to wait for other schemes to process their application.

Crisis support with white goods (North Birkenhead Development Trust & St Vincent de Paul Society) (£160,000)

Throughout the various iterations of the Grant, community-based partners, North Birkenhead Development Trust and St Vincent de Paul Society (Wirral), have provided white goods and other essential items to vulnerable households who do not meet the threshold for Council support through its Financial Support with Welfare Needs Scheme. A further allocation of funding will see this support continue over the coming months. This support is available and distributed across the whole of the borough.

Housing Support Costs (£100,000)

The Fund allows for support with housing costs, in exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need. Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit rather than the Household Support Fund. In addition, eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support Fund. Wirral must first consider whether the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. This funding cannot be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies, or to provide mortgage support. The use of the Fund for this purpose will be administered through the Council's Revenues and Benefits service. Eligibility is expected to be limited based on the criteria stipulated.

Out of School activities - Holiday Activities and Food Support (£150,000)

The holiday activity and food programme (HAF) is a national programme that supports benefits related free school meal eligible children during the spring, summer and winter holiday periods. Over the previous summer/winter we had over 43 clubs and activity venues running over the holidays and the household support fund is funding the food element of the project. Each child attending will receive a nutritious meal each day, they attend the programme. This is a great opportunity to reach thousands of Households during the school

holidays, and with the pressures on everyone's budget, this will give children a warm, exciting and magical time. The HAF project is funded by the Department for Education, managed by Wirral Council, and coordinated by Edsential CIC.

Support for recipients of Housing Benefit (£30,000)

There is a very small cohort on households who receive Housing Benefit and no other benefits provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. The guidance explicitly mentions support for this group as they had missed out on the £900 Cost of Living Payments made by central government. Payment of £900 is to be paid via a Post Office Voucher scheme in November to ensure support is provided to those who need it most.

Care Leavers Food Pantry (£67,600)

Working with the councils Children's Services to provide funding to enable the food pantry to purchased additional items of fresh food to complement the existing offer of dry and long-life goods.

Quality of Life Support for Over 65's (£100,000)

Working with Age UK this grant will allow them to support several projects across the Wirral.

Supporting people to enhance their quality of life with specific focus on, Nutrition, Maintaining/increasing independence at home, Avoidance of hospital admissions, Prevention of carer breakdown and financial support to carers/vulnerable older people for essential items/bills. This funding aims to support around 800 unique individuals, with those in most need receiving more than one area of support. Individuals will be those already registered with Age UK services, and new people that they encounter at Arrowe Park Hospital, in our charity shops and through referrals into services.

They envisage 60% of recipients to be over 65 and that 70% of those supported will have a long-term health condition. Clients from all parts of the Borough will be supported, but there will be targeted support in Wallasey and Birkenhead.

Support for Vulnerable Families (£500,000)

Children's services provide significant support that children and families both from our statutory services and from our extensive early help offer. Our early help offer is non-statutory and is delivered in partnership with community voluntary and faith organisations across the Wirral.

Children's services receive around 12,000 plus contacts per year from professionals and families with concerns about the welfare of the children in the household. Due to the increased challenges regarding fuel poverty and the cost-of-living and are identifying more of these families in dire financial straits. They are no longer able to afford the basics (food, clothing, gas and electricity). For some they are meeting these costs but then cannot afford another basic need (for example bus fare to school etc). For these families they always look for a long-term solution.

They will attempt to help them resolve their financial crisis. However, short term bridging finance is often required, as many of these families have already exhausted funding from other sources. These are cases where there is no other source of funding or help is available. The additional money will be spent in small individual family grants and offered along with the support and advice needed.

Administration costs (£150,000)

HSF Scheme guidance allows for a reasonable level of administration costs to be allocated from the funding. Wirral are utilising this funding to support the administration of the whole programme including but not wholly dealing with the increased administration costs of operating an increased application-based assistance schemes under Emergency Support Fund and small grants programs.

DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS (DWP) VISIT

We were approached by the Local Welfare Assistance policy team at the DWP, to hold an in person visit with Wirral Council to help broaden the DWP's understanding of how the Household Support Fund is being used day-to-day as well as to explore the logistics, outcomes, and operational delivery of the scheme in practice and to explore the role and impact of the Household Support Fund in our community. These meetings are being undertaken with several LAs.

We invited some of our integral partners and stakeholders to join us for this meeting. These are Third Party Organisations who work closely with Wirral Council, supporting our distribution of the DWP Household Support Fund, and to help demonstrate the role and impact of the Household Support Fund in our community.

Members of the Household Support Fund Delivery Team outlined how the funding has been utilised in this and previous tranches of Household Support Fund. Representatives from NEO, Wirral's CAB, Make it Happen (SGP Recipient) and internal colleagues from Housing Options and the Councils Communications Team were also present.

These are some of our integral partners and stakeholders who work closely with Wirral Council supporting our use of the DWP Household Support Fund. Their delivery experience coupled with a clear understanding of community issues faced by our residents is invaluable.

The meeting was very successful with the DWP official noting that that the Wirral have been very proactive in our approach, making wide reaching efforts to ensure that the funding remains available to all in need, but continues to be compliant with the DWP directive for spend.

Each of our partners spoke about the positive outcomes and were able to provide examples of the huge impact Household Support Fund has had on the residents they support.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy & Resources Committee	14 June 2023
Officer Decision Notice – Household Support Fund (Oct 22 – March 23)	8 December 2022
Policy & Resources Committee	9 November 2022
Officer Decision Notice – Household Support Fund	28 June 2022
Officer Decision Notice – Household Support Fund	26 October 2021
Officer Decision Report – COVID Local Support Grant – extension No.2 (21 June 2021 – 30 September 2021)	8 July 2021
Officer Decision Report – COVID Local Support Grant (COVID Winter Grant Scheme – extension)	20 April 2021
Officer Decision Report – COVID Winter Grant Scheme	16 March 2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee	28 January 2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee	1 December 2020
Officer Decision Report – COVID Winter Grant Scheme	24 November 2020

Policy & Resources Committee

11 November 2020