

Cabinet – Supplementary agenda no.1

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on:

Date: Tuesday, 1 October 2024

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: St George's Centre, Pembroke Road, Chatham ME4 4UH

Agenda Item

8. Household Support Fund: 2024/25 Allocation and Free School Meals

Appendix 2 – Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England (Guidance received from the Department of Work and Pensions) (Pages 3 - 24)
This Guidance was not released until 27 September 2024.

For further information please contact Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer/Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer on Telephone: 01634 332715/332115 or Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

Date: 30 September 2024

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Appendix 2

Household Support Fund: Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England (1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025)

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Introduction

1. £421m has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need with the cost of essentials via the Household Support Fund (“The Fund”). This funding covers the period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 inclusive (“The Fund Period”).
2. This guidance sets out the required collaboration between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), County Councils and Unitary Authorities, including their delivery partners (such as District Councils as well as any charitable or third-party organisations (TPOs) to successfully meet the policy intent within the agreed framework. It also provides the framework that County Councils and Unitary Authorities need to work within and the arrangements for distribution of funding and reporting.
3. DWP is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs – hereafter referred to as “Authorities”), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer The Fund and provide assistance to households most in need.
4. Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in this guidance and the accompanying grant determination.
5. Although this is informally considered an extension to the previous five Household Support Fund schemes, it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions as is set out in the Grant Determination letter. Any underspends from the previous scheme cannot be carried forward.
6. This guidance sets out the objectives and framework within which the Fund should be used, and requirements for reporting to ensure the Fund successfully meets its policy intent.
7. This guidance applies to Authorities in England only and should be read in conjunction with the Household Support Fund Grant Determination issued alongside it.

Objective and key principles

8. The objective of The Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need with the cost of essentials. Authorities are expected to offer support throughout the duration of The Fund Period and must develop delivery plans to reflect this.
9. When administering The Fund, Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles:
 - use the funding for the period of 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford household essentials including energy and water bills, food, and wider essentials. Authorities can also use funding to support households with housing costs where existing housing support does not meet this need and to supplement provision with signposting, advice and preventative support.

Note: this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.

- use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information.
- work together with District Councils and third parties including, where necessary and appropriate, other local services. This may include local charities and community groups. This may also 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. It may also include receiving referrals for support and applications made on behalf of an individual from professionals working with vulnerable individuals such as social workers, keyworkers delivering early help and family support, housing officers, health visitors and housing support officers.

10. Whilst immediate needs should be prioritised, Authorities are able to use the Fund to provide preventative support and deliver provision which has a long-term sustainable impact, for example household items which would reduce bills in the long-term. Subject to the considerations around advice services, this can for example include support with income maximisation through advice and signposting to benefit, debt and employment services, as well as activity to build local resilience and prevent poverty.

11. Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2025 and cannot be carried 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 acceptable for vouchers that have been purchased and delivered to households before the end of The Fund to be spent shortly thereafter (see paragraphs 89 to 93 on committed spend).

Note: this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Types of support and eligible spend

12. The Fund is expected to support vulnerable households with energy, food and water costs, and wider essentials, and Authorities should prioritise support which offers immediate impact to those in need. Support can be delivered through cash, vouchers or in kind. There is no prescriptive list which provides a comprehensive definition of eligible spend, but it may include spend on:

- **Energy and Water.** This may include 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 water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, as well as for sanitary purposes and sewerage.

- **Food.** This may include through vouchers, cash or in kind.
- **Essentials linked to energy, water and food.** The Fund can be used to provide support with essentials linked to energy, water and food (for example insulation or energy efficient items which reduce bills, the purchase of equipment such as fridges, freezers, ovens, slow cookers or costs associated with obtaining these essentials e.g. delivery, installation). We encourage Authorities 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 results in immediate and potentially long-lasting savings for the household.
- **Wider essentials.** The Fund can be used to support wider essential needs not linked to energy, water or food 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 including uniform, period and hygiene products, essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle, or paying for fuel. It can also include one-off payments to prevent a crisis.
- **Advice services.** The Fund may be used to provide supplementary advice services to award recipients, including debt, benefit and/or employment advice, where Authorities consider this appropriate. As above, Authorities are reminded that the primary intention of The Fund is to provide support for those households most in need, and we would expect any advice services to complement this. We would not expect a large portion of funding to be spent on advice services. We would expect to see a connection between the funding provided for advice services and the practical support provided under The Fund. We anticipate that a significant proportion of this will be through signposting to existing advice services funded through other routes, such as the Help to Claim scheme which supports those making a claim to Universal Credit.
- **Preventative Support.** The Fund may be used to prevent poverty locally and build local resilience. This enables Authorities to fund activity which prevents vulnerable residents from falling into – or falling further into – crisis. This could include specific support to individual households or wider support within the broader community, such as warm spaces. This could include providing funding to local community groups who deliver preventative services. This is not mandatory activity, and we still expect The Fund to primarily provide crisis support to those most in need. We would not expect a large portion of funding to be spent on preventative support.
- **Housing costs.** The Fund can be used to support housing costs. However, where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the Housing cost element of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit rather than The Fund. In addition, eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments must first be considered before 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). It is expected that the focus of support should be on bills and that support for housing costs should only be given where existing housing support schemes do not meet need. Beyond this, Authorities have discretion to determine the most appropriate use of The Fund for their area, based on their understanding of local need and with due regard to equality considerations.

- Households in receipt of Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, or Discretionary Housing Payments 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. 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.
 - 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. Those who are in receipt of or treated as receiving a qualifying benefit could be entitled to [Support for Mortgage Interest](#).
 - 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 Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of The Fund and should not be the focus of spend.
13. 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, the intention that The Fund provides support throughout The Fund Period, and the risk of fraud and error. Awards to any given household can cover several or only one of the spend eligibility categories listed above.

Administrative Costs and Scheme Evaluation

14. Local Authority allocations also include reasonable administrative costs incurred administering The Fund. In all cases, Authorities should keep administrative costs to a reasonable level. In previous iterations of The Fund, average administrative spend was around 5% of total spend. We expect some variation in administrative costs between Authorities but spend should reflect the intention of the scheme to support those most in need.
15. Administration costs for each Authority will be published on www.gov.uk alongside detail of all spend and volumes related to The Fund.

16. Authorities should deduct their administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining. These include:
 - staff costs
 - advertising and publicity to raise awareness of The Fund (this includes costs to make material more accessible, e.g. translation costs, providing diverse formats, etc.)
 - web page design
 - printing application forms
 - small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production.
 - reasonable costs for evaluating the impact of the scheme at a local level, should Authorities wish to do so (see paragraphs 17 to 28).
17. Authorities will be able to use a limited proportion of their allocations to conduct (and either fully or partially fund) local evaluation of their scheme. This will be considered as an administration cost. We would not expect there to be any significant increase in overall administrative costs because of this activity.
18. It is at the discretion of Authorities whether they choose to conduct such evaluation activity. Authorities are encouraged to consider conducting local evaluations of their schemes to provide evidence of impact and inform the best use of funding within the local area.
19. Some Authorities may deem that conducting evaluation is not proportionate given the resource and cost required relative to the size of their allocation, or if existing local evaluation evidence is already available.
20. The main focus of an evaluation funded in this way should aim to understand the characteristics and experiences of those who are and/or have been in receipt of support from The Fund and the impact this has had on them. To support this, Authorities could also consider the effectiveness of the different ways in which funding is administered and used.
21. Local evaluation activities may include activities such as: data collection (e.g., quantitative surveying and/or qualitative interviewing with recipients, recipient representatives and/or delivery partners of The Fund) and analysis and report writing.
22. All DWP-funded evaluation activity (where this is either fully or partially funded from the Authority's allocation) must:
 - Be undertaken robustly, with regard to the Social Research Association guidance for conducting high-quality research ([What is high-quality social research.pdf \(the-sra.org.uk\)](https://www.sra.org.uk)) to ensure meaningful and usable insights can be drawn from the findings, which are representative of the local area as far as possible.
 - Be carried out with regard to the Government Social Research ethical assurance for Social and Behavioural research: [GSR Ethical Assurance for Social and Behavioural Research - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) to ensure appropriate ethical

standards and compliance with GDPR for anyone involved in the research process.

- Be based on voluntary participation via informed consent. Receipt of support from The Fund must in no way be dependent on individuals participating in evaluation research.

23. To enable evaluation activities, Authorities may wish to consider informing recipients of The Fund that they may be contacted in future for evaluation activities to enable collection of relevant contact details for follow-up research.

24. Subject to interest, DWP can provide further analytical advice and support on evaluations.

25. If the Authority will be spending, in accordance with this guidance, any of The Fund on evaluation activity, this must be indicated in the delivery plan. This spend should be captured within total administrative costs in the Management Information (MI) returns, and also reported there separately so that the dedicated amount spent on evaluation can be determined.

26. If allocation funds are used to carry out evaluation activities, aggregated and anonymised findings must be shared with DWP, and DWP/the Authority may also choose to share these with other Authorities to collate learnings.

27. Completed findings from any evaluation activity (fully or partially funded from Authorities' allocations) must be shared with DWP by the deadline of submitting the final MI return (25th April 2025).

28. Authorities are still able to independently conduct their own self-funded evaluation activities on The Fund. In that case, they may still wish to adhere to the above guidance as a matter of good practice.

Establishing eligibility

29. The Fund is intended to support a wide range of low-income households and is not limited to those in receipt of benefits. 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.

30. 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.

31. 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.

32. As part of this, Authorities should make clear in an accessible format who is eligible for support and how those seeking support can access The Fund. This should align with The Fund's communication requirements outlined in paragraphs 51-53
33. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal, including through engagement with relevant TPOs, to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households to prevent escalation of problems. 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 disabled people, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.
34. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges to meet additional needs in order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated. For example, some disabled people may have increased utility bills due to the usage of equipment, aids or adaptations associated with their disability. They may also have additional heating, water or transport costs. Authorities are therefore strongly encouraged to explore ways in which this group may be supported and must record the total value of awards granted to disabled people in their MI returns for this grant.
35. Authorities should also consider providing support to Care Leavers in their area. Care Leavers can face particular barriers as they leave the care system and begin to live independently. For example, Care Leavers may not have access to the same familial networks as others in their cohort and subsequently will not have the same financial, emotional or social support systems that enable them to live independently, respond to crisis or avoid becoming socially isolated.
36. Authorities should also consider providing support to people with caring responsibilities in their area. People with caring responsibilities may be facing acute challenges incurred through their fulfilling these responsibilities for vulnerable citizens. For example, they may have additional heating, water or transport costs. Authorities are therefore encouraged to explore ways in which this group may be supported.
37. DWP is providing data and information to Authorities to support them to identify those in need in their area as follows:
- information relating to Universal Credit claims with limited capability for work or earnings below the Free School Meals (FSMs) and free prescription thresholds;
 - data on people receiving the Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit elements of Pension Credit;
 - data on people on income-related (IR) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA IR);
 - data on people who are in receipt of housing benefit (HB) only.
38. 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 by taking advice or application referrals from professionals who come into contact with vulnerable households such as social

workers, keyworkers delivering early help and family support, health visitors and housing support officers.

39. Where Authorities proactively identify households who may benefit from support, they 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.
40. Authorities should not make 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 citizen, the Authority or the employer.

Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds

41. Where the Authority relies on exercising their discretion under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 in order to spend funding, such as the funding allocated through The Fund, such payments would fall within the definition of public funds, and those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) would not be eligible to receive support. A discretionary payment made by an Authority under section 1 of the Localism Act is defined for immigration purposes as a public fund, as set out in paragraph 6 of the Immigration Rules.
42. However, Authorities might be able to rely on alternative powers under which to provide support, for example s.17 of the Children Act 1989 if they consider there to be a child welfare concern, or the Care Act 2014 where there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution. In such cases payments made from The Fund may therefore not be deemed to be public funds.
43. The Authority must consider on a case-by-case basis the legal powers and duties they have in order to determine whether an individual with NRPF should be assisted via The Fund. The power to make payments through The Fund is derived from section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 unless the Authority can identify a more specific relevant power. If an alternative power is not identified, the payments must be treated as public funds and cannot be provided to those with NRPF, unless support is required to prevent a breach of human rights.
44. It is for Authorities to determine what support they can lawfully provide to a person with NRPF based upon an individual assessment of their status, circumstances, and support needs. When carrying out this assessment, Authorities will wish to consider their discretionary powers and statutory duties.

Routes of support

45. Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including: proactive support by identifying households in need; application-based support where individuals approach the Authority for support; or issuing grants to TPOs to provide support on behalf of the Authority.

46. As part of their offer, every Authority must operate at least part of their scheme on an 'application' basis – in other words, people should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is flexibility on exactly how this can be run, including through TPOs rather than directly by the Authority. Authorities themselves do not need to run an application service, as long as residents are able to self-refer for support through the scheme elsewhere, and this is made clear to residents. We expect this application-based support to be offered throughout the duration of The Fund, either continuously over the majority of The Fund Period, or at regular intervals throughout the scheme. If delivering application-based support through TPOs, the Authority remains accountable for the eligibility criteria of these partners and must work with them to establish these (please see *Working with Organisations* for further information). Authorities can make the entirety of their scheme application-based if they so wish. Authorities must make sure that this support is clearly advertised and is inclusive and accessible. Authorities should carefully avoid creating burdensome administrative barriers to access support for residents in need.

47. When deciding how to help people, Authorities should consider how they plan to provide support to vulnerable households, such as by paying into bank accounts, use of cash and vouchers, provision of goods. When determining the most appropriate mechanism of providing support for households, Authorities should consider:

- any potential risks to vulnerable individuals, for example the risk of holding cash;
- any fraud risks associated with these payment methods (see section 'Managing the risk of fraud' at paragraphs 95 -106 for further information).

Public Sector Equality Duty

48. In accordance with the public sector equality duty, DWP has had due regard to the potential equalities impacts of this grant.
49. 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.
50. 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.

Communication

51. It is mandatory for Authorities to reference that the grant is funded by the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases. This includes use of the logo in accordance with the [Funded by UK Government Branding Manual](#) provided to all Authorities. This requirement extends to other public bodies (e.g. District Councils) delivering the scheme on behalf of the Authority, and the Authority is responsible for ensuring that this is met.

52. It is mandatory for Authorities to make public their plans for The Fund, including how and when they intend to deliver the application-based portion of their scheme. This should be through a website page dedicated to The Fund headed with 'Household Support Fund' on their Authority website. This webpage must be easily accessible and outline the Authority's plans for funding, including with details of who is eligible in the area, as well as how and when people might be able to apply for the application-based element of the scheme. It should include a specific reference that the grant is funded by the UK Government in accordance with the Funded by UK Government Branding Manual.
53. Authorities should consider inclusive and accessible ways in which they might advertise the availability of The Fund to local people for example in local family or community hubs and GP surgeries. We expect Authorities to advertise the scheme – and in particular the application-based element of their provision – through various channels and not just online.

Working with other organisations

54. Authorities should work collaboratively with District Councils and organisations to meet the objectives of identifying and supporting those most in need. This includes working closely with the third sector and other partner organisations such as community groups who may come into contact with people in need.
55. 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.
56. TPOs may include but are not limited to:
- registered charities, voluntary organisations and community groups
 - schools
 - food banks
 - GPs
 - organisations providing support in particular circumstances
57. Where Authorities are working with TPOs, this should be done on an objectively fair, transparent and non-discriminatory basis whilst 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.
58. Where Authorities are delivering their application-based support through a TPO, transparent eligibility criteria should be agreed with the TPO. Where organisations are acting only as a referral partner, Authorities should ensure the referral partners and the individual applicants are made aware that Authorities remain the ultimate decision maker on the provision of any support from The Fund.

Delivery Plans

59. Authorities are required to complete a delivery plan to outline their intentions for The Fund, clearly setting out their priorities and approach for use of the Fund, and to demonstrate the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding.
60. Authorities are required to send the delivery plan to DWP by 01 November 2024. Delivery plans must be signed off by the Authority's Section 151 Officer. Delivery plans must include the contact information of the Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and responsible Cabinet Member before submission to DWP. Authorities are responsible for informing DWP of changes to Section 151 Officer/CFO or responsible Cabinet Member.
61. Authorities are required to appoint an appropriate Senior Responsible Officer who will be accountable for ensuring a strong delivery plan is developed and agreed through necessary decision-making mechanisms including engagement with the relevant Cabinet Member and ensuring compliance with and progress against their commitments in the delivery plan. Responsible Cabinet Members in each Local Authority are obligated to have read and agreed to their local delivery plan before its submission to DWP.
62. We understand that local priorities for The Fund may change over the course of The Fund Period, including in response to local feedback such as from professionals working with households. Authorities should engage with DWP if they wish to revisit their delivery plan during The Fund Period.

Reporting and Management Information

63. Authorities are required to comply with DWP's reporting and Management Information (MI) requirements. For full details of MI and reporting requirements, see Household Support Fund (October 2024 – March 2025) MI Reporting Requirements.

Access to data

64. 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) between the 'Department for Work and Pensions and LAs (Access, handling, exchange and protection of DWPs' and HM Revenue and Customs' data)'.
65. 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 HB only data through a monthly data share for the purpose of The Fund.

66. 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 data sources for LWP.
67. Staff accessing Searchlight will need to be registered with the Employee Authentication System. 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

68. 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 and target those families and individuals to support. Authorities may also wish to establish if other forms of support are available to the household. In relation to housing costs this must include checking whether the household could receive Discretionary Housing Payments. The Authority must also first consider if the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and, therefore, owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant.
69. Searchlight can only be used to verify a specific individual's DWP benefit information. Therefore, if an Authority identified a group of potential claimants 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

70. The UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and HB only data will be provided monthly via Transfer Your File.
71. Authorities will receive two data shares on a monthly basis:
- **File one** - contains individual data of the National Insurance number, names and addresses (where available) of UC claimants within the Authority area and:
 - income below the thresholds of £7,400 per year for FSMs 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
 - the number of children in the household.
 - those whose award is subject to the benefit cap
 - those with a deduction for Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and who receive Local Housing Allowance
 - the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of those 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 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) or Tax Credits.

File two - contains aggregate data showing those UC claimants that are:

- at or below the FSM income threshold
- at or below the free prescription income threshold, and
- in the Limited Capability for Work group.

72. For a full breakdown of the file contents see Local Welfare Provision monthly data share field definitions at Annex A.

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

Unused funding returned from a TPO

74. Where a TPO returns unused funding before the end of The Fund Period, the Authority is free to spend that funding in any eligible category for the duration of The Fund Period.

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

76. For audit purposes, where an Authority re-issues returned TPO funding after The Fund Period has ended, they must confirm the following by email to **lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk** (copying in their Section 151 Officer/CFO):

- the amount that has been returned;
- reason for the return (for example TPO underspend);
- what the original spend was reported against in their **final** management information (MI) return;
- the intention to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

Funding overlap

77. Authorities should consider household circumstances when making a decision on how to spend The Fund. Households could be receiving other forms of support, and this should be taken into account to avoid duplicating provision where possible. However, households receiving other forms of assistance are not excluded from receiving support through The Fund.

DWP engagement

78. LA Performance Relationship Managers (PRMs) from DWP's LA Partnership, Engagement and Delivery (LA-PED) division will contact Authorities to provide support and gather information throughout The Fund. LA-PED will contact Authorities for initial compliance (where necessary) including where:

- the MI templates have not been signed by the Authority's Section 151 Officer or Chief Finance Officer.
- an incorrect template has been used – MI should only be returned on the MI template provided. No local versions or PDF copies are acceptable.

79. 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.
- 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.

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

81. DWP will continue to respond to questions we receive via the designated inbox as quickly as possible. DWP will also continue to engage with Authorities throughout the course of The Fund Period and will provide opportunities to engage with the department and other Authorities to share good practice and work collaboratively. DWP may host Ministerial engagement roundtable events as required. Where Authorities are invited to these events, an appropriate representative will be expected to attend.

82. 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

83. 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.

84. Payment of The Fund from DWP to Authorities will be made in arrears after the interim MI returns in January 2025 and the final MI return at the end of The Fund Period in March 2025 after DWP has 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. One interim return and a final MI return will be required, and grant payments will be made in respect of the periods 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024 and 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.
85. MI returns must be endorsed by the Section 151 Officer/CFO in accordance with their statutory assurance responsibility in order for the grant payment to be made.
86. Authorities must copy their Section 151 Officer/CFO into the email.
87. The guidance for completion is provided within the Household Support Fund (October 2024 – March 2025) MI Reporting Requirements document.
88. For MI purposes, the definition of spend is grant funding that has been provided to vulnerable households, within the scope of the eligibility criteria, and within The Fund Period of 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.
89. 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 2025 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.
90. 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 Fund Period.
91. 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
 - recycling and re-issuing expired vouchers returned to an Authority after The Fund has ended, provided this is done within a reasonable timeframe, under the same categories of spend as originally reported, and under the same terms as The Fund they were issued under.
92. For audit purposes where an Authority recycles and reuses expired vouchers the Authority must confirm by email to lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk, copying in the Section 151 Officer/CFO:
- the amount that has been returned
 - reason for the return (for example, 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.

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

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

Funding:

Payment	Amount	Date	Notes
Interim	Actual grant spend of up to 100% of allocation*	March/April 2025	Payment made in arrears
Final	Actual grant spend up to 100% of grant allocation* less any previous interim payment	June/July 2025	Payment made in arrears

*Subject to eligible spend criteria

Managing the risk of fraud

95. Fraudsters can target funds of this type.
96. 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.
97. 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.
98. 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.
99. Authorities are also encouraged to ensure checks are in place to verify the identity of those eligible.
100. 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.

101. 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.
102. 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, which may be requested and reviewed as set out in the grant determination, to ensure they take into consideration household income and rent liability. 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.
103. 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.
104. If the Authority has any grounds for suspecting financial irregularity in the use of any grant paid under the 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.
105. If you suspect fraud, you should notify DWP of the:
- number of instances;
 - total amount lost.
106. 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

107. The funding is intended to benefit households most in need of support with energy bills, food, related essentials, wider essentials and (in limited circumstances where existing housing support does not meet need) housing costs. This is in order to help provide targeted support to those who need it with the cost of household essentials. The funds should not be used for any economic undertaking.
108. 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.

Contact

109. If you have any queries about the content of this guidance or use of the funding, you can contact lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk

Local Welfare Provision monthly data share field definitions

The definitions will be updated to include information regarding the additional data share of those who are in receipt of HB only when the details are confirmed.

File 1 – The list of Individuals:

Field Name	Description
claimant1_nino	The national insurance number (NINO) of the lead UC claimant
claimant1_surname	The surname of the lead UC claimant in the Household
claimant1_forename1	The forename of the lead UC claimant in the Household
claimant2_nino	If applicable the NINO of the UC partner in the household. In some cases this may be the same as the UC claimant NINO, usually where the partner NINO data is not available.
claimant2_surname	The surname of the UC partner if Claimant 2 NINO provided
claimant2_forename_1	The forename of the UC partner if Claimant 2 NINO provided
ap_start_date	The start date of the household's UC assessment period (AP)
ap_end_month	This will always be the month of the extract.
has_children_latest_ap	Set to 1 if the UC Household is recorded to have children in the AP used for the extract 1= children 0 = no children
total_children	The number of children recorded in the UC Household for the AP used in the extract, null = no children, the field HAS_CHILDREN_LATEST_AP will also be 0 if there are no children
has_lcw_latest_ap	Set to 1 if a member of the UC Household is in the UC limited capability for work group
eligible_prescription_latest_ap	Set to 1 if the UC Household is below the Free Prescription threshold
earnings_below_fsm_threshold	Set to 1 if the UC Household is below the Free School Meal threshold
country_name	England Scotland

	Wales
local_authority_name	Your LA name
local_authority_code	the standard lookup code for your authority
tyf_la_id_code	the LA ID code as registered on Transfer Your File for your authority
postcode_outward_code	Postcode sector in the ward
ward_name	Name of the ward
ward_code	Code of the ward
cap_applied	True, False or Null
spare_room_subsidy_removal	True, False or Null
local_housing_allowance_applied	True, False or Null
BENEFIT_TYPE	Will show one of the following: UC PC GC SC SC/GC ESA-IR HB
PC/ESA-IR/HB_NINO	The NINO of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_SURNAME	The surname of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_FORENAME_1	The first name of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_1	The UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_2	The UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_3	The UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_4	The UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB_POSTCODE	The postcode as recorded on the UC/PC/ESA-IR/HB customer claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_TELEPHONE_NO1	The telephone number of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer as reported on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_TELEPHONE_NO2	The second telephone number (if applicable) of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer as reported on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC_APPOINTEE_SURNAME	If appropriate the surname of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_FORENAME_1	If appropriate the forename of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_1	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim

PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_2	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_3	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_4	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_POSTCODE	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_TELEPHONE_NO1	If appropriate the telephone number of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_TELEPHONE_NO2	If appropriate the second telephone number of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim

File 2 – The Aggregate file

This shows for your Authority:

Country (England, Scotland or Wales)

Local Authority (the name of your Authority)

LOCAL_AUTHORITY_CODE (the standard lookup code for your authority)

TYF_LA_ID_CODE (the Transfer Your File code for your authority)

For each postcode sector (POSTCODE_OUTWARD_CODE) in a ward (WARD_NAME), (WARD_CODE)

Number of Households in the ward with UC Limited Capability to Work group (HAS_LCW_LATEST_AP)

Number of UC households in the Authority without children

(HHS_NO_CHILDREN_IN_LA)

Number of UC households in the Authority with children

(HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_IN_LA)

Number of children in the Authority in UC households with children

(NO_OF_CHILDREN_IN_LA)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(HHS_NO_CHILDREN_PRESC_OR_FSM)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (HHS_NO_CHILDREN_PRESC)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (HHS_NO_CHILDREN_FSM)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_PRESC_OR_FSM)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_PRESC)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_FSM)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(CHILDREN_PRESCRIPTIONS_OR_FSM)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (CHILDREN_PRESCRIPTION)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (CHILDREN_FSM)