

Report to: Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

Date of meeting: 27 February 2023

By: Director of Children’s Services

Title: Household Support Fund

Purpose: To note the proposed Children’s Services use of a proportion of the latest extension of the Household Support Fund (“the Fund”) and agree the development of a scheme to distribute grant funding as set out in the report

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the proposed use of £2,052,500 of the Household Support Fund, to provide support to households with children between 1 April – 30 September 2023; and**
 - 2) Delegate to the Director of Children’s Services authority to implement the scheme.**
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1 Background

1.1 On 17 November 2022 Government announced in the Autumn Statement that the Household Support Fund (“HSF”) would be extended for a fourth time to support those most in need. The extension will run from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

1.2 Contextually the grant arrives just as the last round of funding will finish on 31 March 2023. The grant follows previous similar schemes which commenced in December 2020: the Winter Covid Fund Support Grant, the Covid Local Support Fund Grant and the Household Support Fund (1 October – 31 March 2022, 1 April – 30 September 2022, and 1 October 2022 – 31 March 2023).

1.3 As of yet the Department for Work and Pensions (“DWP”) has not set out how the scheme should be allocated. Over the last three iterations of the HSF, the amount of funding to Local Authorities (LAs) has remained the same, but the criteria have changed slightly.

1.4 The Council and LAs across the country are urging the DWP to publish guidance on the funding allocation and criteria, to date this has not yet been published.

1.5 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is expecting to be allocated £7,793,567 for the new extension period. This figure is based on the £3,896,783 previously received for a 6-month period (1 October 2022 – 31 March 2023) doubled to cover the new 12-month extension period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024).

1.6 Until the time that Government announces the criteria for the HSF extension, we will work to the anticipated funding allocation in 1.5 and the criteria from the previous round.

2 Supporting information

2.1 While it is helpful that Government has announced that the new extension covers the entire financial year (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024), the proposals being brought forward at this stage are for the first six months of the financial year (1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023), with a review taking place in August 2023. Proposals for the remaining six months (1 October 2023 – 31 March 2024) will be brought forward for decision in September 2023.

2.2 It is proposed that the HSF is distributed to households in need in several ways as set out in the table below:

Allocations Table - 6 Month Plan (1 April – 30 September 2023)

Partner	Amount (£)	Note
FSM eligible pupils 19,500 (2-19 yrs) Hugg food vouchers	1,852,500	£30 for 2-week Easter holiday £15 for May half-term £50 for summer holidays Total of £95 (48% of total funding)
Children's Services Teams	200,000	
Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners	700,000	
Warmer Homes	50,000	
Districts and Boroughs	844,500	
Foodbanks and Food Partnerships	250,000	
Total	3,897,000	

2.3 The portion of the HSF that Children's Services will manage is £2,052,500. The proposal is to provide food vouchers to eligible free school meal pupils of £30 for the 2-week Easter holiday, £15 for the May half-term, and £50 for the summer holiday period. There are approximately 19,500 pupils eligible for free school meals. £200,000 will also be distributed via Children's Services teams directly to vulnerable families in need.

2.4 Distributing the grant to the same partners that ESCC worked with last time ensures continuity in the allocation of support to the full range of beneficiary groups. Utilising voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners to implement the scheme adds considerable value in terms of local community knowledge and an ability to engage with residents who may not be comfortable with statutory services.

2.5 The DWP has indicated that it is reasonable for a Local Authority to plan for HSF 4 using the draft guidance and the previous allocations as a guide. However, once DWP issues the final guidance and local authority allocations if agreed, this report provides delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services to make the following amendments in line with DWP's final guidance and local authority allocations, namely:

- beneficiary groups, eligible spend, or monitoring
- any other changes to HSF 4 that are required to ensure ESCC's adherence to DWP's final guidance and local authority allocations.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The scheme provides a further opportunity to extend the support to households with children, households with pensioners, households with a disabled person and other vulnerable households within East Sussex who are experiencing financial challenges.

3.2 The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the proposed use of £2,052,500 of the HSF, to provide support to households with children between 1 April – 30 September 2023; and
- 2) Delegate to the Director of Children's Services authority to implement the scheme.

ALISON JEFFERY

Director of Children's Services

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None