



# Delegated decision report

## **DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

**DECISION CANNOT BE TAKEN BEFORE 1 DECEMBER 2022**

Title **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 3**

Report to **COUNCILLOR DEBBIE ANDRE, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG SKILLS**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed approach and offer for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund (HSF) extension across the Isle of Wight. This report seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills for spend and grant funding to organisations in support of vulnerable households this autumn and winter.

### BACKGROUND

2. On 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022, the Government announced an extension to the Household Support Fund as targeted financial support for those in need over the six-month period. Guidance and grant determinations were confirmed on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Although this has been announced as an extension, unallocated funds from previous grant rounds are unable to be carried forward due to a change in the spend criteria, namely the removal of ringfenced proportions of the fund to certain household compositions.
3. The £421 million Household Support Fund is being distributed through County and Unitary Councils and is to be used primarily to support households in the most need with utility costs, food, and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
4. The Department for Work and Pensions, the government department that is providing the funding, expects top tier local authorities to administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households particularly affected by the pandemic. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of

vulnerable households in their area. Support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits; therefore, Authorities should also use other sources of information to identify vulnerable households, including advice from professionals who come into contact with vulnerable households such as social workers and Supporting Families advisors.

5. The conditions of the Household Support Fund extension differ from the previous two rounds of funding in that there is no determination as to which household composition receives funding, although DWP have stated that assistance should be focussed on households that are not in receipt of other government financial assistance. This may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits or those who are not in receipt of other forms of government support such as those only in receipt of Housing Benefit who are not eligible for the Cost-of-Living payment, pensioners who have no way of increasing their income, households with children, disabled people, and care leavers.
6. The Isle of Wight's share of the Household Support Fund is £1,131,576.08, to be spent between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
7. The Household Support Fund is similar to previous DWP funding through the Covid Winter Grant and the Covid Local Support Grant, administered by IWC and known as the connect4communities programme.

## CONSULTATION

8. Consultation with community and voluntary sector organisations, town, parish and community council representatives, internal council departments, and Citizens Advice IOW was undertaken to determine the wider need of specific cohorts and how best to utilise the funding.
9. In addition to these meetings, engagement has been undertaken with the existing community pantries to ascertain the required level of onward funding.
10. This engagement has resulted in an offer, under the programme name connect4communities, proposed across IOW.

## THE IOW OFFER

### Proactive targeted schemes

11. **Food Voucher scheme**
12. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the grant of £507,000 to purchase food vouchers for residents providing support to several different cohorts including:
  - (a) A one-off £500 food voucher for the 80 IWC foster carers, totalling **£40,000**. The aim would be for this voucher to be sent at the beginning of December to assist with costs leading up to Christmas, releasing household funds that can then be used towards rising utility costs.
  - (b) Two separate £50 food vouchers sent to Care Leavers over the age of 18. The intention would be for one voucher to be sent in the run up to Christmas and the other to be sent towards the end of January. This would total **£17,000** and benefit 170 care leavers.
  - (c) A one-off £150 food voucher to 900 households whose disabled children are in receipt of a gateway card. The aim would be for this to be sent direct by the voucher company during the month of January to help with post-Christmas costs and would utilise **£135,000** of the budget.
  - (d) A £100 voucher to around 1850 households in receipt of Housing Benefit only totalling **£185,000**. It is intended that this would be sent in February to spread support across the Island throughout the whole grant period.
  - (e) A one-off £100 voucher to around 1000 Island households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support but not on a passported benefit. This would total **£100,000**. The aim would be for vouchers to be sent during January.
  - (f) Two separate £100 food voucher to 150 adults with learning difficulties working with the No Barriers Team. This would total **£30,000** with one voucher being sent as soon as possible and the other towards the end of December. A further **£19,500** would be ringfenced for use by the no-barriers team for use if clients find themselves in financial difficulties with food, utilities, or wider essentials.
13. **LWEH Mobile Hub**
14. Colleagues in Adult Social Care and Housing Needs have been working with the Living Well and Early Help Service to establish a Mobile Hub that will cover the Island, providing a hot meal and warm space for any resident in need.
15. Staff in the Hub will also be able to signpost residents to other forms of support such as debt advice, adult learning, mental wellbeing etc.
16. It is recommended that approval is given for a grant of £15,000 to fund food supply for the Hub, making the service more sustainable, benefitting Island residents for longer.

17. Working with the Adult Social Care and Housing Needs team, we have been able to estimate that the funding would benefit around 5000 warm meals, based on the calculation that an average meal would cost £3.00

### **Application based process**

#### **18. Support for food and utility costs**

19. It is recommended that a grant of £75,000 is made available to Citizens Advice for two initiatives.
20. Citizens Advice will use the funding to provide a single point of contact for IOW residents to understand the sources of support that may be available to them through the connect4communities programme, and via other means. This will be via the existing Help Through Crisis Helpline ([Isle Help - Help Through Crisis \(iow.gov.uk\)](https://www.iow.gov.uk/help-through-crisis)).
21. Secondly, Citizens Advice will use the funding over the next six months to provide food vouchers (to those not eligible for one of the food voucher schemes above) as well as direct financial support to households with fuel bills and wider essentials.
22. It is felt that targeting this funding at fuel bills will reduce the potential for double funding with other grants available and asking Citizens Advice to administer this fund will ensure that any financial support can be provided alongside broader support and advice. Citizens Advice are also well placed to undertake ID and benefits checks to mitigate the potential risks of fraudulent claims. IOW Council may require Citizens Advice to target communities where there is specific local need.
23. It is anticipated that over 200 households will benefit from this funding.

#### **24. Community Pantries**

25. Community pantries work on the principle of giving those in need the opportunity to have a 'helping hand' by getting food at a lower rate on a weekly basis. Items found in the pantry will be a range of fresh, frozen, and general foods which will change on a weekly basis. Access to the community pantry is by way of membership, and for a small weekly contribution, members receive food to a significantly higher value. For example, members are charged a nominal sum of £5 per shop and receive £15 plus worth of goods. Community pantries will be encouraged to provide a delivery service for those who are not able to come and shop for whatever reason.
26. It is proposed that funding is provided to establish three new community pantries across the Island and approval is sought from the Cabinet Member to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve grant awards to organisations for the delivery of such schemes in consultation with the Executive Lead Member up to the value of £75,000. We are currently working with organisations in Newport and West Wight and are also hoping to cover the Sandown / Shanklin or Cowes area.

27. The aim of this funding would be to expand the network of community pantries across the Island, thus developing the experience and expertise to continue establishing further pantries if required in the future. Proactive exploratory discussions are underway with schools, community groups and family hubs to identify suitable organisations with the ethos and interest to operate a community pantry. Furthermore, organisations will be able to apply for grant funding should they wish to operate a community pantry on the Isle of Wight.

28. It is also proposed that further funding of £41,000 is approved to support the three existing pantries on the Isle of Wight with the purchase of food. The rise in the cost of food, coupled with the sharp increase of members is hitting the pantries' limited budget and this will help them to continue providing a sustainable source of food for those in need.

29. **Community Grants**

30. A fund of £240,000 is recommended to develop local initiatives where community and voluntary groups along with Town, Parish and Community Councils can apply for funding to support the community with food and fuel projects, either by proactively working with residents already known to them or by offering an application scheme.

31. Community organisations particularly those working with unpaid carers and pensioners will be proactively approached and encouraged to apply for a proportion of this fund, along with those working in the energy sector to specifically target those households using LPG for heating, and residents struggling with the rising cost of utilities.

32. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 5) for targeted financial support for those in need over autumn and winter in consultation with the Executive Lead Member.

33. **Discretionary funding for schools**

34. The connect4communities team have received numerous requests from members of the public asking for support with everyday essentials such as food, school uniform and other essentials.

35. It is recommended that approval is given for grant funding of £100,000 to be provided to schools by way of vouchers that can be obtained in relation to these costs.

36. Working with Evouchers, funding would be held on account by IWC, that schools can draw down on, either for food vouchers to help those families most in need, uniform costs, or essentials such as weather appropriate clothing that can be used at a variety of supermarkets or uniform shops. Parents would apply directly to their child's school for the voucher.

**37. Exceptional Housing Costs**

38. As in previous DWP Household Support Funds, the grant guidance states that in exceptional cases of genuine emergency and where existing housing schemes do not meet the exceptional need, support for housing costs can be met.
39. In the case of providing financial support around housing, eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support Fund. Similarly, 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).
40. 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.
41. The Household Support Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies, nor can it be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the Fund (such as food, energy, 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.
42. In assessing cases where exceptional housing support may be required, the connect4communities team will work the IWC's Homeless Prevention team and Revenues and Benefits team to establish eligibility and the value of any financial support on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the DWP criteria set out in paragraphs 39-41.
43. It is recommended that £10,000 is made available to fund exceptional housing support.

**44. Administration and Communication Costs**

45. The Household Support Fund allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable local authorities to deliver the scheme and it is therefore permitted for IWC (and partners) to deduct estimated administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining.
46. IWC is seeking to minimise administration costs and approval is therefore sought for funding of up to £51,000 (4.5%) to cover reasonable administration costs for all partners which will include limited staff costs, web page design communications and marketing support.

## FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

47. A summary of the proposed funding across the initiatives to be delivered through the connect4communities scheme is set out in table 1:

Table 1:

<b>connect4communities – IOW’s Household Support Fund</b>	
<b>Component</b>	<b>Funding Allocation (£)</b>
Food Voucher Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-off food £500 food voucher for foster carers</li><li>• Two separate £50 food vouchers for care leavers</li><li>• One-off £150 voucher for gateway card holders</li><li>• A one-off £100 voucher to households in receipt of Housing Benefit only</li><li>• A one-off £100 Voucher for households in receipt of LCTS as a non-passported benefit.</li><li>• Two separate £100 vouchers for adults with the no-barriers team, with an additional £19,500 ring-fenced to this cohort for use in financial emergency.</li></ul>	507,000.00
LWEH Mobile Hub	15,000.00
Grant to Citizens Advice for Open Access to Individuals	75,000.00
Community Pantries (new and existing)	116,000.00
Community Grants	240,000.00
Discretionary work with schools	100,000.00
Exceptional Housing Costs	10,000.00
Administration costs	51,000.00
Sub-Total	1,114,000.00
Contingency	17,576.08
<b>Total Plan</b>	<b>1,131,576.08</b>

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

48. The council are limited to the use of the funds within the restrictions of the DWP.
49. All funding granted to third party organisations (including schools, colleges, and early years providers) will be supported by a grant agreement setting out the conditions of the funding as well as reporting requirements.
50. Third party organisations will be required to report to the Council on how they have spent the funding provided, in line with the DWP grant criteria set out in paragraph 5.
51. Allocation of funding across the grant criteria set out in paragraph 5 should be monitored to ensure spend remains compliant with the terms of the grant.

52. For the latest grand round of Household Support Fund, DWP have increased the level of Management Information that is required to be collected by councils and TPO's. This includes a breakdown of the number of awards provided by household composition, a breakdown of the category of support i.e., food / energy and water etc. in addition to how the support is awarded (vouchers, tangible items etc.) and by whom (LA, TPO etc). We have been informed this data is required by the DWP to inform future methods of support.
53. One further level of detail that needs to be captured, where possible, is the number of individual households we have assisted. It is thought best to monitor this by individual organisation and then collated centrally. This poses the risk of the same household being recorded multiple times if visiting multiple organisations, but the DWP are aware of this.

#### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

54. Consultation has been undertaken with community and voluntary organisations, town, parish and community council representatives, internal council departments, and Citizens Advice IOW.
55. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is included as Appendix 1 to this report.



## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills following receipt of the connect4communities report on [1<sup>st</sup> December], approves the following by delegated decision.

56. The approval of funding of up to £507,000 to be granted to provide multi-value food vouchers to up to 4,150 households detailed in paragraph 12.
57. A grant of £15,000 to be used for the purchase of food used by the Living Well and Early Help Mobile Hub, for the supply of up to 5000 hot meals.
58. A grant of £75,000 is made available to Citizens Advice for them to use to financially support over 200 households with fuel bills over the 6-month period and provide a telephone signposting service to the connect4communities programme. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 5.
59. The approval of £116,000 to be used to expand and support the network of community pantries across the Isle of Wight, offering a more sustainable approach to helping households.
60. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve community grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 5) for targeted financial support for those in need until 31 March 2023 in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills totalling £240,000.
61. A grant of £100,000 to be used for discretionary funding for schools to help families in need with vouchers that could be used for food, uniforms, or wider essentials.
62. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to agree the fund of £10,000 to be used to assist exceptional and genuine emergency cases with housing costs in accordance with DWP grant conditions.
63. That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve the reallocation of any Household Support Fund scheme remaining or underspent funds to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member. This will ensure that where spend does not meet the approvals set out in this report, the Isle of Wight Council can rapidly adapt the approach to ensure needs are met.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

Contact Point: Suzanne Smith, Assistant Director, Children's Services, ☎ 07793 759047 [Suzanne.smith2@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Suzanne.smith2@hants.gov.uk)

STEVE CROCKER  
*Director of Children's Services*

(CLLR) DEBBIE ANDRE  
*Cabinet Member for Children's Services,  
Education and Lifelong Skills*

## APPENDICES ATTACHED

64. Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment

**Name of project or proposal (required):** COVID Household Support Fund known as the connect4communities Programme

**Name of accountable officer (required):** Suzanne Smith

**Email (required):** suzanne.smith2@hants.gov.uk

**Department (required):** Childrens' Services

**Date of assessment (required):** 19/10/22

**Is this a detailed or overview EIA? (required):** Overview

### **Describe the current service or policy:**

The DWP COVID Household Support Fund will provide £1,131,576.08 of funding to the Isle of Wight Council to support those most in need, with costs of utility costs, food, water bills and essential household costs. The grant conditions state the primary use of the fund should be on utility costs, food, and water bills with no ringfencing as to household compositions. A variety of initiatives have been identified working with education establishments and local community partners to ensure households who are most vulnerable have access to food and fuel over the 6-month period.

**Geographical impact (required):** All IOW

### **Describe the proposed change:**

The COVID Household Support Fund is aimed at vulnerable families, particularly those with children, pensioners and individuals and will offer financial support with food and energy bills until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Working with schools, colleges and early years providers, the proposed programme will deliver food vouchers to a wide range of vulnerable families including foster carers, households with disabled children, households in receipt of non-passported Local Council Tax Support benefit, Care Leavers, adults with learning disabilities and households in receipt of Housing Benefit only. We will provide direct financial support to Citizens Advice working directly with vulnerable families not eligible for the food voucher schemes and will provide funding for the homeless prevention team to assist exceptional and genuine emergency cases in accordance with DWP grant conditions. Through grant funding, the programme will provide a range of community led projects to assist with food and fuel need across the Isle of Wight. We will also provide funding to the community pantry scheme for the establishment of three new pantries along with supporting the existing pantries with food costs. We will look to fund food for the Mobile Food Hub, which will provide hot food and a warm space for all residents and provide discretionary funding for schools to access to provide school uniform and food vouchers to families in need.

**Who does this impact assessment cover? (required):** Service users

**Has engagement or consultation been carried out? (required):** Yes

**Describe the consultation or engagement you have performed or are intending to perform:**

Due to the change in guidance, we have consulted with community and voluntary organisations, town, parish and community council representatives, internal council departments, and Citizens Advice Isle of Wight to determine the most appropriate method of distribution of funds to reach as many vulnerable households as possible across the Isle of Wight. We have also consulted with the existing community pantries to create the offers under a programme name of 'connect4communities'.

**Age (required):** Positive

**Impact (required):** Children, pensioners, and individuals who are vulnerable (eligible for benefits) or find themselves in hardship due to the impact of COVID 19, this programme, with signposting from agencies, will help to identify and help those people to ensure they have access to food and heating, as well as other basics which may be identified such as cooking facilities, bedding, or other essentials.

**Disability (required):** Positive

**Impact (required):** Children, pensioners, and individuals with disabilities and who are vulnerable (eligible for benefits or in a low-income setting) or find themselves in hardship due to the impact of COVID 19, this programme, with signposting from agencies, will help to identify and help those people to ensure they have access to food and heating, as well as other basics which may be identified such as cooking facilities, bedding, or other essentials.

**Sexual orientation (required):** Neutral

**Race (required):** Neutral

**Religion or belief (required):** Neutral

**Gender reassignment (required):** Neutral

**Gender (required):** Neutral

**Marriage or civil partnership (required):** Neutral

**Pregnancy and maternity (required):** Neutral

**Poverty (required):** Positive

**Impact (required):** Additional funding will be distributed to help those children, pensioners, families, and individuals who live in poverty or need food, energy, and other basic items, should have more access to help.

**Rurality (required):** Neutral

Any other brief information which you feel is pertinent to this assessment (optional):

Please confirm that the accountable officer has agreed the contents of this form  
(required): Yes