

## North Devon Policy Household Support Fund 4

The purpose of this document is to set out the objectives of the scheme and to outline the methods and working practices to meet these.

The Household Support Fund is intended to help individuals and families with rapid short-term financial support to address economic vulnerability and financial hardship from April 2023 until end March 2024. It is designed to ensure that people can access emergency short-term support, for those in most need with regard to food, energy, water bills and wider essential costs.

### Scheme Eligibility

The Household Support Fund is intended to help residents who have limited income and are in need of support to help with significantly rising living costs who meet the following criteria;

1. Be over the age of 16; and
2. Live in NDC district (main residence);
3. In need of financial support to meet the immediate short-term needs of themselves or dependents.

### Award Process

The scheme is broken down into 3 sections;

- A payment will be awarded, via BACS, to Households who claim Housing Benefit (HB) but are not in receipt of: **Universal Credit, JSA(IB), ESA(IR) , Pension Credit , Working Tax Credit , Child Tax Credit**. Households receiving the benefits highlighted in red will receive cost of living payments via DWP during 2023/24; this scheme will enable NDC to make payments to those households claiming HB only.
- All working age households, who receive an element of council tax reduction as at 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 will receive a voucher for £45 & all working age households, who receive an element of council tax reduction as at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 will receive a voucher for £50. These payments will be made via the Post Office Payout Scheme which can be exchanged for cash at any Post Office within the district.
- An application scheme will allow agreed 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations to apply for funds on behalf of their clients. A full list of agreed 3<sup>rd</sup> parties will be available on the NDC website. **Priority will be given to those households on low income who do not qualify for the cost of living payments.** Awards will generally range from £100 - £500 depending on circumstances. These awards will be made via Post Office Payout Vouchers, supermarket vouchers and white good vouchers. Any payment over £500 would need to be approved by a Head of Service.

### Types of assistance that can be provided via 3<sup>rd</sup> party application referral process

The NDC Household Support Fund can be provide assistance for the following items:

- **Food**
- **Energy and water bills-** 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 with water bills

- including for drinking, washing, cooking, and sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- **Essentials linked to energy and water** - including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.
  - **Wider essentials** – support with essential household items and other essential monthly expenditure including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel.
  - **Housing Costs** - in exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs with caveats (see **Appendix A**)

### **Consideration of the budgetary provision**

- Funding for the North Devon Household Support Fund, totalling £582,540, is provided by Devon County Council as part of their allocation of the national Household fund.
- The budget will be monitored and the standard Management Information (MI) reporting template, provided by DWP to record the amount provided or paid to vulnerable households under the remit of this grant, will be completed.

### **Repeat Applications**

Only one application per household, per period, will be considered for April 2023 – September 2023 & October 2023 – March 2024.

### **Data**

- North Devon Council will only collect data relevant to an individual's Household Support Fund application via 3<sup>rd</sup> party referrals
- Data will be held in Firmstep (our CRM software) with all appropriate security measures
- Data will be used to make contact about decisions and arrange payment of awards
- Data may be shared within the organisation to support efforts to redirect an applicant to other support that may be available.
- Data will be shared with the Post Office and Black Hawk Network to enable payments to be made
- Personal data will not be kept longer than necessary

### **Appendix A**

In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs with the following caveats:

- Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB) rather than the Household Support Fund.
- Eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support 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).
- In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through the Household Support 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 Household Support Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.