

North Devon Policy Household Support Fund 5

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 2024 until end September 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;

- All working age households, who receive an element of council tax reduction as at 1st May 2024 will receive a voucher for £40. 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 3rd party organisations to apply for funds on behalf of their clients. A full list of agreed 3rd parties will be available on the NDC website. Awards will generally range from £100 - £300 depending on circumstances. These awards will be made via Post Office Payout Vouchers, supermarket vouchers, white good vouchers and utility pre-payment cards. Dependent on circumstances occasionally payment via BACS may be appropriate. Any payment over £500 would need to be approved by a Head of Service.
- A proportion of the fund will be ring-fenced for Housing Officers to apply on behalf of their clients who are moving from temporary accommodation into settled accommodation. These awards will be made via BACS, supermarket vouchers and white good vouchers and will be dependent on the individual needs and circumstances to assist to purchase essential items.

Types of assistance that can be provided via 3rd 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 £247,718.91, is provided by Devon County Council as part of their allocation of the national Household fund. An additional 15% is provided for the administration of the 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 will be considered.

Data

- North Devon Council will only collect data relevant to an individual's Household Support Fund application via 3rd 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.
- Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the Housing cost element of UC and Housing Benefit (HB) rather than The Fund. In addition, eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) 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).
- 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.
- 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 UC and HB. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for DHPs. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of The Fund and should not be the focus of spend