

Tandridge District Council

Household Support Scheme Local Eligibility Framework for Phase 4

Background

On 17 November 2022, the Chancellor announced that due to global inflationary challenges and the significant rise in the cost of living, the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

This latest phase of the grant totals £842m and the DWP is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer the fund and provide assistance to households most in need.

The expectation is that The Fund should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support. It 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.

The scheme for Surrey is managed by the County Council, with amounts delegated to District and Borough Councils for distribution. Local authorities have discretion to determine the appropriate schemes for their area, based on their understanding of local needs and the grant determination letter issued by DWP.

Payment of the grant allocation is on an arrears basis and is subject to the submission of two Management Information (MI) returns to DWP outlining the authority's (SCC) grant spend and the volume of awards for period 1 October – 31 December (due January '23) and for the period 1 January - 31 March (due April '23).

Tandridge Allocation

Tandridge District Council has been allocated £316,343 which will be paid during 2023/24.

Tandridge Local Eligibility Framework and Approach

The Tandridge Household Support Scheme Local Eligibility Framework has been developed in accordance with the Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England.

The scheme runs until 31 March 2024 and is intended to help ease the financial pressure on residents with low incomes and to support those most in need.

In administering the scheme, we will:

- Use discretion to identify and support those most in need.
- Use the funds to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy or water bills and other essential household expenditure
- In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, we will support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need
- Work with local services, community groups and other partners to identify and support households within the scope of the scheme.

Who can apply?

All payments to individuals will be by means of application. Applications to the Tandridge Household Support Fund will be accepted from or on behalf of people who are in financial difficulties and struggling to meet the cost of food, fuel, water or other essential household expenditure.

Applicants must:

- Be a householder over the age of 16
- Live in Tandridge District Council Area as their main residence.
- Be struggling to meet the immediate and essential short term needs of themselves or their dependents.

How will applications be prioritised?

Applications will be prioritised to balance supporting as many residents as we can with targeting the limited funds to support those who need our help the most.

We will prioritise (in no particular order) the scheme for the following applicants:

- Those with dependent children
- Those with disability or health problems
- Households with residents of pensionable age
- Unpaid carers
- Lone parents
- Those who are or are at risk of becoming, homeless including those living in temporary accommodation
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Those leaving care or hospital
- Those facing an emergency crisis such as a recent fire or flood

What can be funded?

Due to the limited amount of funds available we will prioritise items necessary for day to day living such as food and essential items.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- Cost of food
- Energy and water
- Essential costs linked to energy and water - Support with sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service or repair,
- Repair or purchase of essential household appliances
- Servicing and repair of heating systems
- School Uniform and other essential clothing
- Transport related costs

In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing support schemes do not meet this need the Fund can be used to support housing costs. The ongoing housing support for rent should be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit or through Housing Benefit rather than the Household Support fund.

In addition Discretionary Housing Payments 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.

Funding may also be channelled through charity, voluntary or third sector groups should they meet the aims and audit requirements of the programme. Decisions on funding such groups will be taken by the Chief Finance Officer (S151) in consultation with Group Leaders and will likely be an option if the main direct application route does not consume the allocation.

What will not be funded?

It is unlikely that applications for the following will be successful:

- Mortgage Support – however homeowners may still qualify for other elements of the fund such as food, energy, water and essential household expenditure
- Paying off non-essential debt
- Parking fines, ULEZ or congestion charges
- Where financial support has already been provided through another grant or fund
- Expenses in connection with legal costs – fees, costs, fines, damages etc
- Expenses for self-employed business support
- Repairs/improvements to the home – except boiler servicing/repair & essential white goods
- Any need that occurs outside of the UK
- Medical expenses/treatment
- Respite Care

How to apply

Applications are made via an on-line form that can be found on the Council's website at www.tandridge.gov.uk/supportfund.

Telephone support will be provided for those who require assistance to complete the form.

Applications can be made by the applicant, their representative or a third party acting on their behalf.

What information will need to be provided?

To enable the Council to consider an application, we will need details about the applicant and members of their household. This may include financial information relating to income and savings and circumstances and reasons for an application being made. We may also need to request documents, receipts, financial statements - including bank statements, and other evidence to allow the Council to make an informed decision about an application.

If all the supporting evidence is not supplied with the application, the case will be rejected, the customer will receive an email to advise them, and a new application will need to be made via the website.

What is the assessment process?

Once a completed application and supporting evidence has been received the application will be considered by a Council Officer who will make a decision based on the information provided and any other information available to them. They will take into account all the circumstances and reasons that led to the application being made.

How much will be paid?

As part of the application process applicants will be asked to give an indication of the support that is required. The Case Officer will determine the amount of the support based on local economic factors and arrangements in place with other agencies/retailers. It will not always be possible to provide the full amount due to the limited funds available.

As an indication it is anticipated that in all but exceptional circumstances awards for food, utilities and other essential items will not normally exceed £150 for households without children and £350 for households containing children.

How will payments be made?

Once a decision has been made on your application you will be notified via email of;

- Whether an award has been made and the reason for the decision
- The amount of the award

Payments will be made by BACS transfer to the nominated bank account within the application form. All awards from the fund will be made as quickly as possible to meet the agreed needs of the household.

Reviewing the decision

There is no right of appeal against a decision not to make an award or about the amount of an award. If you are not happy with the outcome you can ask us to review your application within 5 days of our decision.

Requests for a review should be made in writing and must state the reasons why you do not agree with the decision and why you are asking for a review. The review will be carried out by an officer not involved in the original decision and you will be notified of the outcome of the review within 14 days of your request.

Repeat applications

Support will only be given for one application per household.

Other information about the scheme

Administrative costs will be deducted from the grant allocation to cover the reasonable costs incurred administering the scheme. These include:

- staff costs
- advertising and publicity to raise awareness of the scheme
- web page design
- application form design
- small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production