

## Tandridge District Council

### Household Support Scheme Local Eligibility Framework

#### Background

On 1 October 2021, the government (DWP) announced funding to target financial support for vulnerable households over the winter months, to be known as the Household Support Grant. This new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and totals £500m.

The grant is to provide support to certain local authorities in England for expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in accordance with the Grant Conditions to provide support to households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency) this winter as the economy recovers.

At least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children, beyond this, local authorities have discretion to determine the appropriate schemes for their area, based on their understanding of local needs.

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 6 October – 31 December (due January '22 ) and for the period 1 January - 31 March (due April '22).

#### Surrey County Council Allocation

Surrey County Council's (SCC) allocation of the funding is £5,290,829.72, based on the population of the authority weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The total funding for SCC has been split as follows:

1	Food vouchers for children entitled to Free School Meals, including Early Years through school holidays	£1.96m
2	Care Leaver support over Christmas	£0.2m
3	Support to food banks	£0.2m
4	Support to VCF sector	£0.15m
5	Enable enhanced offer of Crisis Fund	£0.15m
6	Distribute to Borough and District Councils to enable local solutions to meet local requirements	£2.8m

In detail this is:

1. Continue to support the issue of food vouchers for those eligible for benefit related free school meals, during the upcoming school holidays (October half term, Christmas, February half term and Easter). This will include 2, 3 and 4 year old children with Funded Early Education Provision (FEED) and EY Pupil Premium.
2. Support to care leavers over the Christmas period to assist with the costs of food and bills.

3. To ensure the Crisis Fund is equipped to meet the demand until the end of the financial year, taking in to account inflation and anticipated demand related pressures and to enable the extension of the level of support offered.
4. Distribute funding to specialist countywide organisations, that actively reach households in need of support with the cost of food and essential bills.
5. To provide some funding to foodbank/community fridges/food clubs to ensure they have enough stock of food/fuel vouchers to meet any increase in demand until the end of the financial year.
6. Distribute the majority (£2.8m) to Boroughs and Districts to utilise existing schemes, local knowledge and local VCF networks to target specific local need in their respective areas. We will allocate based on population adjusted for deprivation factor, which mirrors the DWP formula for the initial allocation.

### **Tandridge Allocation**

Tandridge District Council has been allocated £234,649 which will be paid in two tranches of £117,234.90. The first payment has been received and the second instalment following the submission of a management information (MI) return in January 2022.

### **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 2022 and is intended to help ease the financial pressure on residents with low incomes and to support those most in need while the economy recovers this winter.

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?**

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 over 70
- 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 day to day living such as food and essential items.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- Food – provided in kind, through vouchers or cash
- Energy and water – Support with energy bills for any for of fuel used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking or lighting and water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking and for sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- 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
- Broadband and phone bills
- Transport related costs

In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing support schemes do not meet the exceptional 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.

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.

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.

### **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 or improvements to the home – except boiler servicing or repair and 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 <<Link>>. 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.

### **What is the assessment process?**

Once a completed application and supporting evidence has been received the application will be considered by a Case 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 £100 for households without children and £300 for households containing children. Awards for items such as the repair or replacement of white goods will not normally exceed £500 per item.

### **How will payments be made?**

Once a decision has been made on your application you will be notified in writing of;

- Whether an award has been made and the reason for the decision
- The intended use of the award
- The amount of the award
- How the award will be paid

Payment may be made by voucher or direct payment to a supplier or by BACS transfer to a bank account. All awards from the fund will be made as quickly as possible to meet the agreed needs of the household. In general, vouchers will be processed within 3 working days, other payments will be processed within 10 working days.

### **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 a senior officer not involved in the original decision. You will be notified of the outcome of the review within 14 days of your request.

### **Repeat applications**

Support will normally be provided from the fund once, In exceptional circumstances repeat applications will be considered on their merit.

### **Other information about the scheme**

At least 50% of funding is ring-fenced to support households with children with up to 50% of the total funding to other households in need of support this winter.

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
- printing application forms
- small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production