

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to provide up to £30k of the Household Support Fund to deliver support for families with children 0 to 5yrs old.
Date of decision:	25 th June 2024
Decision maker:	Director of Resources and Assurance
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 10 May 2024 delegated operational matters in relation to the Household Support Fund to the Director of Resources and Assurance Link: Household Support Fund 5 - Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning has been consulted about the approach to support children and families as part of the Household Support Fund framework.
Decision made:	To provide up to £30,000.00 of funding from the Household Support Fund to support families with children 0 to 5yrs old that have been referred on by a specified provider with a one off payment of £75. Within the £30k funding Citizens Advice would receive £12,000 to provide support and assistance to parents with their finances in order to ensure they are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to.
Reasons for decision:	Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £1,329,601.78 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) under the Household Support Fund. In line with DWP guidance most of the funding should be earmarked to support families with children and pensioner households who would otherwise struggle with energy, food and energy bills as well as other essential costs. The decision to support families with children between the ages of 0 to 5yrs old would meet the recommended guidance. Families will be identified via referrals through Children’s Centre, Health Visitors, Midwives, Nurseries/ Early Years settings, schools and Third Party Organisations (that are funded through the HSF). This is to ensure that the most in need are best placed to be in receipt of the funding. The support provided would be a one of payment of £75 that could potentially benefit up to 240 households. Within the £30k funding Citizens Advice would receive £12,000 to provide support and assistance to parents with their finances in order to ensure they are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to.
Equality Considerations:	Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows; a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Local authorities have discretion on exactly how the Housing Support Fund is used within the scope set out in the guidance for April 2023 to March 2024 issued by the Department of Work and Pensions and the local eligibility framework which is set out in paragraph 5 of this report. In prioritising low income households, there is likely to be a

	<p>positive impact for people who are financially disadvantaged (although this is not in itself a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010). If there are households in urgent need due to rising living costs, they may access support through the Local Welfare Provision service of the Council. The scheme specifically targets families on low incomes with children who are eligible for free school meals. It will also aim to target disabled households, especially those that have high utility bills. The Household Support Fund will provide additional support to other financially disadvantaged households in Herefordshire, many of these households will include those who share a protected characteristic e.g. age, so by utilising the scheme this will support the council in discharging its Equality duty by supporting many of these households to access these funds through third party agencies. All agencies involved in the distribution of the funding will be made aware of their equality responsibilities in regards to the Equality Act.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>The cost of the scheme will be funded through the Household Support Fund allocation of £1,329,601.78. Referrals for this support will be made through Children’s Centre, Health Visitors, Midwives, Nurseries/ Early Years settings, schools and Third Party Organisations (that are funded through the HSF fund) and not via an open application process. The council recognises that the pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities in our society, and this is being further compounded by the increased cost of living. By providing support for families with children under 5yrs old who have been identified at risk will help to elevate pressure from the rising cost of food and household essentials price increases.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Not to approve spend to provide funding to support families with children 0 to 5yrs old. This is not recommended. The Household Support Fund is expected to support households most in need. Families with children below school age are often not eligible for support with the focus of support historically being targeted primarily towards children of school age.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: 25/06/24

Andrew Lovegrove
 Director of Resources and Assurance