

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to provide up to £50k of the Household Support Fund to deliver support to Care Leavers 18 – 25yrs old
Date of decision:	5 October 2023
Decision maker:	Director of Resources and Assurance
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 20 April 2023 delegated operational matters in relation to the Household Support Fund to the Director of Resources and Assurance Link: Decision - Household Support Fund 2023/24 - Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning and cabinet member for children and families were consulted on this decision.
Decision made:	To provide up to £50k of funding from the Household Support Fund to support care leavers between the ages of 18 to 25yrs old with energy costs during the winter period and assistance purchasing wider household essentials. Applications to use the fund will be made by the Children in Care Social Workers or Care Leavers Personal Advisors via Access to Resources Panel/Agreement via Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £2,659,203.57 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) under the Household Support Fund.</p> <p>In line with DWP guidance most of the funding should be earmarked to support those most in need and affected by the recent cost of living crisis. The decision to support care leavers between the ages of 18 to 25yrs old would meet the recommended guidance.</p> <p>Care leavers are a vulnerable group who are at greater risk of poor health, unemployment and poverty by virtue of the fact they have experienced significant trauma during their childhood. They have been identified as a demographic risk from the increasing prices of fuel and heating this winter. By providing care leavers with financial assistance from the Household Support Fund will enable them to keep warm over the winter without having to stretch their finances even further.</p> <p>The financial support could benefit up to 225 care leavers and enable the recipient to receive up to a £220 payment. The payment will be used to support with energy costs during the winter period when usage tends to be higher. Purchasing of wider essentials such as air fryers and electric blankets that would contribute to reducing overall energy consumption will also be an acceptable use of the financial support provided.</p> <p>The money will be held in children's finance. Applications to use the fund will be made by the Children in Care Social Workers or Care Leavers Personal Advisors via Access to Resources Panel/Agreement via Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.</p>
Equality Considerations:	<p>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.</p> <p>The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how</p>

	<p>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 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p>	<p>The cost of the scheme will be funded through the Household Support Fund allocation of £2,659,203.57.</p> <p>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 care leavers between 18 to 25yrs old will help to elevate pressure from the rising cost of energy over recent years.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Not to approve spend to provide funding to care leavers 18 to 25yrs old. This is not recommended. The Household Support Fund is expected to support households most in need. By providing funding to care leavers will allow for some of the county’s lowest income individuals to keep warm during the winter months.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None.</p>

Signed

Date: 5 October 2023