

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to allocate up to £50,00.00 to the preventative support programme as part of the Household Support Fund.
Date of decision:	17 th December 2024
Decision maker:	Head of Communities
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 7 November 2024 delegated operational matters in relation to the Household Support Fund to the Talk Community Lead Link: Decision - Household Support Fund 6 - Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning and Director of Finance have been consulted about the approach to support children and families as part of the Household Support Fund framework.
Decision made:	To allocate up to £50,000.00 from the Household Support Fund to the preventative support programme. Community organisations will be able to apply for up to £2,000.00 in grant funding to provide a preventative support that helps alleviate financial stress and improve overall wellbeing, building local resilience. (up until 31 st March 2025).
Reasons for decision:	<p>There is a cost-of-living crisis in the UK resulting in unprecedented pressures on people already in poverty, people in Herefordshire will be forced to make tough decisions about when and what they eat, what they can do in life, and when they can afford to heat their home.</p> <p>Funding towards the preventative support programme is available as part of the Household Support Fund, to enable community hubs and organisations across Herefordshire to provide preventative support for residents that are potentially at risk of falling into financial crisis or further into financial crisis. We will invite local community organisations to deliver sessions and activities that alleviate financial stress, improve wellbeing and prevent poverty locally. The offer must engage with financially vulnerable residents in Herefordshire and make a measurable impact on those residents' financial resilience and wellbeing.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £1,329,601.78 from the Department of Works and Pensions under the next phase of the Household Support Fund which will run from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025. The expectation is that the funding should be used primarily to support households in the most need.</p> <p>This scheme will form part of wider offer that is being developed as part of the allocation of the Household Support Fund.</p> <p>Between March and May 2024, 300 people per day were declared insolvent or bankrupt in England and Wales. Additionally, the Citizens Advice Bureau in England and Wales handled 1,183 debt-related issues daily during the year leading up to May 2024.</p> <p>By utilising government funding for preventative support, there will be a positive impact on vulnerable residents at risk of financial crises. This support will help individuals become more resilient and less likely to fall into debt. Research highlights direct links between financial management and the effects on physical and mental wellbeing. Preventative support empowers participants with knowledge about financial services, enabling them to prepare for life events, address financial difficulties, and build resilience. These outcomes are expected to positively affect their overall wellbeing.</p>

Equality Considerations:	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.</p> <p>Due to the scope of this project and its potential impact on certain protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached as an appendix to the cabinet report.</p> <p>In summary, this project impacts on protected characteristics as follows:</p> <p>a. Age - Pensioners who are just above the pension credit threshold will be eligible for support for their heating over the winter months. Working with Age UK will enable us to identify those pensioners most in need.</p> <p>b. Disability - Services within the council that work with disabled people in receipt of adult social care services will be asked to identify households in need of support financially to help reduce the impact of increasing energy costs.</p> <p>c. Pregnancy & Maternity - Parents identified by professional colleagues, who need financial support to pay for essentials related to children, for example, nappies, formula milk, clothing, or food.</p> <p>d. Other: Carers, care leavers, homeless, economic deprivation - Services within the council that support unpaid carers will be consulted with to consider how financial support can be offered to households most in need.</p> <p>The EIA did not identify any negative impacts at this time. Any future negative impacts will be reviewed and mitigated accordingly.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The cost of the preventative support programme will be funded through the Household Support Fund allocation of £1,329,601.78.</p> <p>Each community organisation will be able to apply for up to £2,000.00 which will benefit a minimum of 25 community organisations.</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. Supporting vulnerable individuals addresses local inequalities and prevent the escalation of problems for households.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Not to approve funding for the preventative support programme. This is not recommended. The Household Support Fund is expected to support households in most need. By providing funding to community organisations to provide preventative support will prevent poverty locally and build local resilience.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: 17/12/2024

Emily Lowe
Head of Communities