

# Household Support Fund (HSF) Scheme 2 – City of York Council

1 April 2022 to 31 September 2022

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## Background

1. The Government announced on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 that a new Household Support Fund (HSF) would be available for families in financial need. £421 million has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with significantly rising living costs. This funding covers the period 01 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 inclusive. Local Authorities have discretion on how this funding is used within the scope set out in the Government guidance.
2. At least one third of the total funding must be used to support households with children, at least one third of the total funding must be used to support pensioners, with up to one third of the total funding to other households genuinely in need of support.
3. The expectation is that the Household Support Fund should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs where appropriate. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
4. The previous HSF scheme ended on 31<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The new scheme is similar and is to support the same demographic of the city as the previous similar financial support schemes.

## Finance & Rules

5. City of York Council has been given £1,037,906 to cover the period 01 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.
6. Funding will be paid to the council by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) in arrears. Two management information returns with a

breakdown of spend across the core categories will be required by DWP to facilitate this. An interim MI return is required by 22 July 2022 for spend for the period 01 April 2022 to 30 June 2022. The interim MI return will be used to determine eligible spend to 30 June 2022 and an interim grant payment will be made to CYC for this period when the information in our return has been verified.

7. A final MI return is required showing total spend from 01 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 by 21 October 2022. The final MI return will be used to determine total eligible spend to 30 September 2022 and a final grant payment will be made to the council for this period when the information in our return has been verified.
8. A portion of the funding may be allocated to administration costs by the local authority. This must be detailed on the returns and be deemed reasonable by DWP.
9. Local Authorities have the flexibility and discretion to distribute the funds to best fits the scheme's objectives. There are two conditions that must be adhered to:
  - Ensure a minimum of 33% is allocated to households with children.
  - Ensure a minimum of 33% is allocated to pensioners.
  - Payments must be to help in one of the eligible categories (Food, Energy & Water, Essentials linked to Energy & Water, Wider Essentials, and Exceptional emergency housing costs).

## **City Of York HSF Details**

### **Overview**

10. Funding will be distributed as efficiently as possible to families with children, pensioners and other vulnerable households in most need with food, energy and water bills. This will be done in two ways:
  - Providing support to financially vulnerable households already identified through Council Tax Support.
  - A complementary discretionary means tested application route available for those households not known to us.

## Target Audience

11. Primarily we will target low income households with families who are known to us and are most likely to need assistance with food energy and water bills.
12. Anyone not in the above category in need of help with food, energy and water bills will also be able to apply through a means tested route.
13. Wider essential costs in line with the guidance will also be considered on a discretionary basis.

## Distribution of Funds/Application Routes

14. Funds will be distributed through cash payments directly into customer bank accounts. This will provide the flexibility to pay for various household bills as appropriate.
15. Successful recipients will receive one payment in the July to help with budgeting.
16. There will be two mechanisms for distributing funds:-

### Route 1a – Direct payment

All identified Council Tax Support (CTS) customers

- With dependent children
- In receipt of High Rate Personal Independence Payment
- Pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support

This will involve a simple information gathering process in order for the customer to claim their award. These customers have already been means tested through the CTS/PIP/ESA/UC process, so this is purely to gather bank details in order to make payment.

Payment amounts will be paid directly into their bank accounts.

The amounts will depend on family size (See Annex A).

**Route 2 - Discretionary.** This Route will be discretionary means-tested awards for any other eligible essentials as set out in the Government's guidance. We would expect these to generally come through as a supported application. Any exceptional awards will be up to a maximum of £500.

**Route 3 – CYC Food Voucher Scheme.** A budget of £50k will be allocated to CYC Food Voucher Scheme.

Registered local advice and support workers, both CYC and voluntary sector partners, will be able to provide CYC food vouchers to customers who contact them directly for assistance with food.

Applicants who are assessed as outside any of the above criteria will be directed to alternative advice and support as appropriate.

### **Payment Frequency**

17. There will be one application window for the standard payments via Route 1. Payments to be made in July for 01/04/22-31/09/22
18. Discretionary payments will be made on an ad-hoc basis in conjunction with the payment periods as above.

## **Annexe A**

### **City of York Household Support Fund 2**

- I. York Household Support Fund 2 (HSF) is provided by City of York Council to support people who are most in need.
- II. York HSF will provide assistance to families with children, pensioners and other vulnerable households.
- III. York HSF can provide assistance with
  - Food
  - Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
  - Water bills (including sewerage)
  - Other essential costs linked to energy or water
  - Other wider essentials on a discretionary basis
  - Some exceptional housing costs.
- IV. Grant award payments will be made to the applicant's bank account.
- V. The scheme is discretionary, awards will be assessed on the criteria set out. Applicants who are assessed as outside the criteria will be directed to alternative advice and support as appropriate.

### **Who can apply?**

- VI. The scheme is open to City of York residents who are over 16 years of age, who require urgent financial assistance over the period.

VII. To be considered you must require financial assistance **and** have inadequate savings to meet eligible costs in line with the scheme.

**And** you are

- A family with a child / children

**Or**

- A household with a member who is over state pension age

**Or**

- A person in need of additional support

VIII. The definition of a household with a child is a household containing any person:

- Who will be under the age of 19 as at 30 September 2022 or
- A person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid or free school meals are provided.
- Where an eligible child lives on his or her own, they are a household that includes a child covered in the one third allocation for households with children.

IX. A household with a pensioner is any household containing any person:

- Who has reached state pension age by 30th September 2022 (and no eligible children as defined above are resident)

X. Households which include a person aged 19 to 25 with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and/or care leavers may still be eligible for grant support however that support falls within the one third allocation to other households (without children or pensioners).

XI. A person in need of additional support may include, but is not restricted to:

- Anyone suffering severe financial hardship
- Someone age 24 or under with an Education, Health and Care plan
- Someone age 19 or under classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- A person who has a physical or sensory impairment, learning disability or mental health problem<sup>1</sup>.
- Elderly, frail or confused older people
- People who are seriously ill or have a severe long term health condition.
- People who are recently bereaved
- Pregnant women or those who have recently given birth
- Recently unemployed people
- Care leaver
- Those fleeing domestic abuse
- Those who have difficulty in understanding, speaking or reading English

### **Who cannot apply?**

- XII. The following categories of people do not qualify for help:
- People who do not live within the City of York Council boundaries

### **What assistance can I apply for?**

- XIII. York HSF can provide assistance with
- Food
  - Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
  - Water bills (including sewerage)
  - Other essential costs linked to energy or water
  - Other wider essentials on a discretionary basis
  - Internet connection/data bills
  - Some exceptional housing costs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Royal College of Psychiatrists and Money Advice Trust's Debt collection and mental health: ten steps to improve recovery provides useful guidance and further definition of what constitutes a mental health problem

- XIV. Assistance will be considered based on propensity to pay essential bills in line with the scheme eligibility criteria. We will use monthly expenses, liabilities and capital for your household to determine this.

### **How to apply**

- XV. Grants will be provided through two routes

#### **Route 1 - Invited to apply**

- XVI. People who meet the following eligibility criteria will be invited by letter to apply for the grant scheme.
- Families with dependent children under 18 who are currently receiving Council Tax Support.
  - People in receipt of Housing benefit/Council Tax Support and Enhanced Personal Independence Payments (PIP).
  - People over state pension age - who are currently receiving Council Tax Support.
- XVII. The invitation will letter give details of how to apply. This will be through an online application. The web link is provided in the letter.
- XVIII. Anyone who needs assistance to apply can contact our Benefits Team or talk to one of the advice and support services across the city.

Or contact our customer service team.

- XIV. This support will be provided as one payment in July 2022. These payments are intended to help families with household bills. The payment will be a standard amount based on the number of children in the family.

#### **Route 2 - Direct applications**

- XV. Residents who have not been invited to apply and are struggling to meet their utility bills can also apply directly for a grant at [www.york.gov.uk/householdsupportfund](http://www.york.gov.uk/householdsupportfund)
- XVI. Grants will be through a discretionary means tested application which will require applicants to prepare some financial information. Applications can also be made for exceptional financial circumstances relating to other essentials which will be assessed on a discretionary basis.

- XVII. Any exceptional discretionary awards will be made on an individual basis as appropriate.

### **What information I will need to provide**

- XIV. We will need to ask for information and evidence to show Applicants meet the criteria as
- your household includes a child/ren
  - you are a person in need of additional support
  - Your household income, savings, and expenditure, including
    - Earnings
    - DWP benefits
    - Any other income
    - Readily available funds - cash in hand, in the bank or building society accounts;
- XV. We will need to establish why you applying for financial support. We may ask about your personal circumstances in depth to make sure you are seeking all available support.
- XVI. When applying for assistance with
- Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
  - Water bills (including sewerage)
  - Other exceptional emergency costs
- XIV. We will need to see evidence you are liable for these costs and the amounts owed and how your utilities are paid for e.g. Pre-payment meter, monthly direct debit, and quarterly.
- XV. If you are not seeking the support you need we will suggest agencies that may be able to help you. For example this could be getting you some advice and help on how to prepare an income and expenditure budget or by helping you to access more specialist agencies such as, for example, the StepChange debt charity.

### **How many times can I apply?**

- XVI. There will be one application award payment. The funding is ring-fenced and covers the period from 1 April 2022 until the 31



September 2022.

Route 1 -. Payments to be made in July for period 01/4/22-31/09/22

Route 2 - Discretionary payments will be made on an ad-hoc basis responding to individual applications.

### How will awards be made?

- XVII. Awards will be paid directly to people’s bank account (x1).
- XVIII. Standard award Levels will be as below (excludes discretionary Max £500)

### Families with dependent children

Household	Children	Amount £ (x1)
Family (single)	1	150
Family (single)	2	175
Family (single)	3	200
Family (single)	4+	225
Family (couple)	1	175
Family (couple)	2	200
Family (couple)	3	225
Family (couple)	4+	250

### Households over state pension age

Per household	Amount £100
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### Households receiving enhanced PIP

Per household	Amount £100
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### Reviews

- XIV. The scheme is discretionary meaning that there is no right of appeal. However you do have the right to a review if you are unhappy with our decision. In this case the decision will be looked at again by someone who did not make the original decision.
  
- XV. Where the Council cannot help it will provide you with information about other agencies that may be able to help and where appropriate, make a referral on your behalf. If you remain unhappy you can use the Council's complaints process.

## **Annexe B**

### **Definitions**

The definition of a household with a child is a household containing any person:

- who will be under the age of 19 as at 30 September 2022 or
- a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid or free school meals are provided.
- or where an eligible child is living on his or her own, they are treated as a 'household'

The definition of a household with a pensioner is any household containing any person:

- who has reached state pension age by 30th September 2022 (and no eligible children as defined above are resident)

Households which include a person aged 19 to 25 with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and/or care leavers may still be eligible for grant support however that support falls within the one third allocation to other households (without children or pensioners).