

Briefing Note

Subject: HSF – Update on progress of the Household Support Fund

Date: 30th September 2024



SUBJECT	DETAILS
Purpose	<p>In response to the following question submitted by email from Councillor Adam M Aston on the 30th September 2024.</p> <p><i>Can the committee please be given an update on progress of the current round of the Household Support Fund.</i></p>
Background	<p>In the Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced that there will be HSF5/extension for a further six months from 1st April to 30th September 2024. The Government confirmed the funding amount for Dudley would be £2,625,519 for six months.</p> <p>The HSF is 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).</p> <p>The HSF5 grant conditions were the same as previous rounds, and local authorities were informed to consider prioritising the allocation of funds to three key priority groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disabled people.• People with caring responsibilities.• A small amount of funding can be used for provision of advice services, directly related to dispersal of funds.
How HSF5 was distributed in Dudley.	<p>We recognised that residents facing financial challenges may encounter barriers to accessing an online application, due to costs associated with internet access and computer availability. We were also aware of the varying levels of digital literacy. Therefore, we worked with partners to adopt a more holistic approach to accessing support, aimed at increasing accessibility.</p> <p>Funds were allocated to Dudley support services and also to the voluntary sector with an aim to reach residents that don't usually access council services.</p>

	<p>The funds were distributed depending on the need and urgency. e.g. Emergency cash payments, Purchasing essential items like a cooker, and direct support for fuel and food via vouchers.</p>
<p>Overview of HSF5 distribution routes and percentage of allocated funds.</p>	<p>A PowerPoint presentation has been included (see appendix 1), providing a detailed breakdown of the HSF5 allocations.</p> <p><i>*Note: the data presented is for April 2024 – August 2024.</i></p> <p>Please see the following slides provide a concise overview of distribution of HSF5.</p> <p>Slide 5 Spend plan including details of HSF5 allocation.</p> <p>Slide 8 of the presentation shows HSF5 distribution routes and percentage of allocated funds.</p> <p>Slide 23 shows an infographic summarising how HSF5 was spent; number of households and the amount of funding allocated.</p>
<p>Survey feedback from residents that had applied for HSF.</p>	<p>To assist us with evaluating the HSF5 allocation, a survey was shared on the Cost-of-Living webpage and by our partners who had assisted in distributing HSF. Please see slides 14 – 22.</p> <p>The aim of the survey is to collect feedback from residents that had applied for HSF. The survey was launched on 8th August 2024 and is due to run until 31st October.</p> <p><i>*Note: These are provisional results on 12th September. Some questions allowed multiple answer responses so the percentage of people who responded to each answer option within each question is out of the 170 respondents. On this basis the total of all answer options in one question can be more than 100%.</i></p>
<p>Next steps</p>	<p><u>Communication Plan</u></p> <p>This will focus on targeting specific audiences and working with partners to ensure funds are directed towards sustainable efforts that prevent poverty. Collaboratively work with Councillors to identify communities in need, to ensure our efforts reach those who will benefit the most. Including development of a webpage to share how HSF5 has been allocated and how it has benefited residents experiencing financial hardship. Including data, a video and case studies.</p>

	<p><u>Distribution of the extension of HSF (HSF6).</u></p> <p>We have received guidance from DWP on the Household Support Fund extension (from 1st October 2024 until 31st March 2025). Dudley has been allocated £2,625,519. The guidance is similar to the previous guidance for HSF5, with the addition of using the fund to prevent poverty locally and build local resilience, preventing vulnerable residents from falling into – or falling further into – crisis.</p> <p>Given that the grant is only for 6 months there will be a similar distribution to other HSF grants, but with a stronger focus on Winter Warmth for older people, this will include work to check whether any older person seeking help is claiming for Pension Credits if they are entitled to do so and if not, to support them to do this (this proposal is subject to formal decision).</p> <p><u>Financial Wellbeing and Mitigating Poverty Strategy</u></p> <p>We recognise the impact that the current economic challenges are having on our resident's health and wellbeing, and in response we have worked with partners to coproduce the Financial Wellbeing and Mitigating Poverty Strategy. The strategy is focused around three themes that address the roots cause of poverty, not just the response to poverty crisis.</p> <p><u>DCVS Poverty Summit</u></p> <p>Co-host a fourth Poverty Summit with DCVS to provide an opportunity for voluntary and community groups working with people experiencing financial hardship to come together and explore we can do together differently to help people facing poverty. This event also explores how our combined efforts can contribute to the Financial Wellbeing and Mitigating Poverty Strategy.</p>
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Supporting Documentation	Appendix 1 – PowerPoint Presentation Household Support Fund 5 (HSF5) Delivery and Next Steps.