

BRIEFING NOTE

Specific Government assistance provided to the Council to distribute to help with Council Tax since the COVID pandemic from 2020/21.

2020/21 – Government provided funding for a £150 hardship scheme for working age council tax support claimants. Payment went directly onto the council tax account. For those who had a liability of £150 or less they had no council tax to pay. Those claimants with liability above £150 had their liability reduced by £150.

2021/22 – Government provided additional funding to enable Council's to reduce council tax. NCC used part funding to provide a £300 hardship scheme for working age council tax support claims. Payment went directly onto the council tax account. For those who had a liability of £300 or less they had no council tax to pay. Those claimants with liability above £300 had their liability reduced by £300.

2022/23 – The residual Government funding carried forward from 2021/22 enabled the Council to provide a £200 hardship scheme for working age council tax support claims in the current financial year. Payment went directly onto the council tax account. For those who had a liability of £200 or less they had no council tax to pay. Those claimants with liability above £200 had their liability reduced by £200.

Additional financial assistance provided by Government to assist with the Cost of Living are as follows:

£150 Council Tax Energy Rebate Payment

Provided for households who live in a council tax property in Bands A to D (over 126,500 in Northumberland). This is a direct payment to households either into their bank account, via post office, or as a last resort, onto their council tax account.

Northumberland Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme

Fund of £647.5k to be distributed in line with NCC policy:

- Top up payment of £17 to those in receipt of council tax support in Band A to D
- £167 payment for those in receipt of council tax support in Band E to H
- £400 payment to households not connected to the national electricity grid
- £150 payment for households in receipt of severely mental impairment exemption for council tax in Bands E to H
- £150 payment for occupants of registered houses of multiple occupation

Household Support fund

The Government announced that a new Household Support Fund grant (HSF) would be made available to councils. The new grant covered the period 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The Council's allocation was £2.480 million with the total amount provided directly to vulnerable households was £2.383 million (96% of grant allocation) This included:

- £1.711 million was allocated to households with a child (approximately 72%)
- £0.672 million was allocated to households without children (approximately 28%)¹

On 31 March 2022 the Government announced that pensioners and families were set to benefit from the extension to the Household Support Fund. This grant covers the period 1 April 2022 to 30

September 2022. The Council's funding allocation was £2.480 million. This is an ongoing exercise with allocation going to all households, those with children and pensioners. The assistance takes the form of:

- Food payments
- Fuel, energy and water payments
- Other wider essential payments

The Treasury has confirmed that a new scheme will be in place to provide support to vulnerable households covering the period 01 October 2022 to 30 March 2023. The Council has been advised of an indicative grant determination of £2.480 million.