



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

DATE: 8 MARCH 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: **Household Support Fund Update**

Report of Maureen Taylor Interim Executive Director Communities and Business Development

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Corporate Resources
Cllr Wendy Pattison, Adult Well-being

Purpose of report

This briefing paper provides an update of Northumberland County Council's progress for delivery of the DWP Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 06th October 31st December 2022.

Recommendations

- To note the content of the report and the DWP initial Management Information return for 31st December 2021
- To help promote awareness of the Households Support Fund with those residents who may need support and assistance.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to Thriving, Living, Learning and Connecting priorities in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018- 2022

Background

On 30 September 2021 the Government announced that a new Household Support Fund (HSF) grant will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this winter. This new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and totals £500m. **Northumberland County Council indicative funding allocation is £2,480,330.00.**

Local Authorities are encouraged to use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area. As **support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits**, Local Authorities are encouraged to identify vulnerable households

through advice and support from other professionals and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector partners.

Reporting requirements

Authorities are required to make two Statements of Grant Usage and management information (MI) returns.

MI return	Reporting period		Deadline
Interim MI return	From: 06 October 2021	To: 31 December 2021	Deadline: 21 January 2022
Final MI return	From: 06 October 2021	To: 31 March 2022	Deadline: 22 April 2022

An interim MI return was required by 21 January 2022 for spend for the period 06 October 2021 to 31 December 2021. The interim MI return will be used to determine eligible spend to 31 December 2021 and an interim grant payment will be made to the Local Authority for this period once the information in the return has been verified.

Interim MI Return Summary:

- Total Expenditure as of 31st December 2021: **£780,623.79**
- Committed Expenditure as at 31st December 2021: **£1,645,048.77**
- Remaining Available Fund for period 01/01/2022 - 31/03/2022: **£835,281.23**
- Total planned expenditure for period 06/11/21 – 31/03/2022 **£2,480,330.00**

The table below shows the Interim MI Return as of 31st December 2021 for all receipted expenditure.

Table 1: Initial MI Return for period 06/11/21-31/12/21

Total Awards	
Item	Spend (£s)
a) Total amount provided to vulnerable households	£777,378.79
b) Administration Costs	£3245
c) Total LA spend (a+b)	£780,623.79

Total Value of Awards split by Household Composition			
	a) Households with Children	b) Households without Children	c) Total (a+b)
Spend (£s)	£700,398.47	£76,980.32	£777,378.79
Volumes	19097	1830	20927

Total Value of Awards Split by Category						
	a) Food	b) Energy and Water	c) Essentials linked to Energy and Water	d) Wider Essentials	e) Housing Costs	e) Total (a+b+c+d+e)
Spend (£s)	£571,912.44	£180,190.29	£12,635.47	£12,640.59	£0.00	£777,378.79

Delivery Plan

The MI return does not capture committed expenditure for weeks 50, 51 and 52 where receipts have not yet been processed for payments. This includes funding for Christmas/New Year 2021 School Holiday period. Expenditure is performing against delivery plan, and we have a high confidence in fully exhausting the fund by 31/03/2022.

Deliberate action has been taken not to exhaust the fund in the first half of the reporting period due to other financial support available in the period such as:

- DFE Holiday Activity & Food programme (HAF),
- DHSC Practical Support Payment (PSP);
- Northumberland CAB Fuel support pathway
- DHSC Test & Trace Self-Isolation payments.

There will be an anticipated increase in referrals for support through HSF over the coming period, as the impact of both increasing fuel and utility bills and the reductions in universal credit payments start to take hold within households.

The period 01/01/2022 to 31/03/2022 will see an increase in both targeted support and universal referral aimed at vulnerable households with and without children with a particular focus on:

- supporting Free School Meals during the non-term times February 2022 and Easter 2022.
- vulnerable residents experiencing fuel stress and hardship due to high fuel and/or energy costs
- households experiencing food poverty or insecurities

DWP has allowed flexibility within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and allows Northumberland County Council to apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility. The list above is not exhaustive.

Widespread communication is planned through NCC and NCT channels to ensure maximum awareness and to promote the fund.

Access to the fund will be facilitated by NCT via telephone during the following times (with the exception of bank holidays):

- Monday to Friday – 9:00am to 18:00pm

Northumberland Communities Together Tel: 01670 620015

Email: NCT@Northumberland.gov.uk

- Out of Hours & Weekends

Out of hours and weekends are handled by NCC OneCall emergency duty system. An out of hours voicemail service is also available including directing callers to other potential avenues of support. Tel: 01670 536400

Table 2: Progress against draft delivery plan.

Area of Funding	Planned Activities	Total		
		Anticipated spend (£s)	Actual	Committed as of 31/012/21
Support for Food of which is supporting Households without children 0-19yrs...	Continue to support food poverty and insecurities across communities. Direct food provision, emergency food provision, Pay point Payments, Shopping Vouchers sustainable community food offers	£700,000	£71,012	£350,000 (£421,012)
Support for food of which is supporting children eligible for Free School Meals during holidays	Support for families through shopping vouchers, Pay Point Payments, direction to Holiday Activity & Food (HAF) programme where eligible	£820,330	£450,900.44	£288,800.98 (£739,701.42)
Support for food of which is supporting children not currently eligible for FSMs (£s)	Emergency welfare support and assistance to needs and support for universally funded Holiday Activity & Food Programmes	£100,000	£50,000	(£50,000)
Support for Energy and Water.	Continue to support the Northumberland Fuel partnership and Warmer Homes partnership to address fuel poverty and insecurities through offer of Fuel Payment Vouchers, Pay Point Payments, and other discretionary support offers such as Greener Homes Grants. Targeted provision to vulnerable households living in cold homes, experiencing fuel poverty.	£240,000	£180,190.29	£150,000 (£330,190.29)
Support for Essentials linked to Energy and Water.	Support to households experiencing emergency with heating, electrical appliances such as cookers, boilers etc or other equipment essential for cooking, heating . Payment via Pay Point or through VCS organisations supporting provision of refurbished/recyclable goods	£120,000	£12,635.47	£40,000 (£52,635.47)
Support for Wider Essentials (Please specify in planned activities).	Support to households for emergency assistance with warm winter items, cooking utensils, bedding and other essentials - targeted provision for those experiencing homelessness, or experiencing transition due to domestic abuse, leaving prison, care etc and are deemed eligible and vulnerable and have no other means of support. Support to those households who meet HSF scheme eligibility but have no recourse to public funds	£100,000	£12,640.59	£30,000 (£42,640.59)
Support for housing costs (Please specify in planned activities).	Support with housing costs associated with connectivity bills to ensure individuals keep connected addressing social isolation; can process online transactions such as food deliveries, medical appointments, prescriptions, etc. Scheme allows discretion for other emergency housing bills, call out cost's plumber, electrician etc if aligns to scheme criteria.	£40,000	£0.00	£5,624 (£5,624)
Other spend (Please specify in planned activities).	Support with the delivery of prescriptions or other deliveries to help maintain households during periods of practical hardship or isolation. Continue to support the Northumberland Clothing Partnership to help provide and distribute clotting essentials to families in need of support and assistance.	£40,000	£0.00	(£0.00)
Scheme Administration.	Administration Charges for Pay Point transactions, Voucher Schemes etc. There is no provision for staff costs Northumberland waives the right to ensure maximum allocations goes to households in need.	£20,000	£3245	(£3245)
Overall as of 31/012/2021.		£2,180,330.00	£780,623.79	£864,424.98 (£1,645,048.77)

Implications

Policy	This is a government initiative providing support to all Local Authorities for the period to 31 March 2022
Finance and value for money	The draft delivery plan outlines the indicative areas of spend as per the criteria in the national guidance. The Council is required to submit monthly returns to the Department on spend. Funding is paid to the Council in arrears
Legal	There is no requirement for Authorities to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Authority's local eligibility criteria
Procurement	Not Applicable this a grant allocation under section 13 of the Local government Act 2003
Human Resources	NCT staffing resources will administer the grant. A small allowance can be ring fenced from the Fund should that be necessary. This is not expected.
Property	Not applicable
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities are encouraged to use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area. Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of debt advice provision). Authorities have the local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those most in need and ensure an inclusive and equitable offer.
Risk Assessment	Not applicable
Crime & Disorder	Potential positive impact on crime and disorder prevention when vulnerable residents feel supported
Customer Consideration	Open access to the Fund will encourage dialogue and provide support from this Fund. Where that is not appropriate, NCT will maximise its networks to find solutions to meet the needs of our vulnerable residents. Customer satisfaction is expected to be good.
Carbon reduction	Not directly applicable. Funding to support fuel insecurities will lead to conversations with residents about green energy supplies

Health and Wellbeing	Supporting vulnerable people to maintain their health and wellbeing over the winter period by providing targeted and personalised support
Wards	All

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Maureen Taylor
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth Cllr Wendy Pattison

Author and Contact Details

Paul Brooks
Head of Northumberland Communities Together
Mobile: 07770981864
Email: paul.brooks@northumberland.gov.uk