

REPORT TO:		Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
DATE:		23 July 2025	
PORTFOLIO:		Councillor Vanessa Alexander - Resources and Council Operations	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Lee Middlehurst Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Contact	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Household Support Fund 2025/2026	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	Select: Y/N	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Overview and Scrutiny with an overview of the Household Support Fund (HSF) scheme and the Councils approach to the administration of this scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Overview and Scrutiny note the contents of the report and comment accordingly

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

- 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny have requested this report for information purposes only.

Background

- 3.2 On 30 September 2021, the Government announced that vulnerable households across the country would be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials over the winter. This funding covered the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 inclusive.
- 3.3 The Household Support Fund (HSF) was distributed by councils in England to directly help those who needed it most. The grant was distributed through small payments to support vulnerable households meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.

- 3.4 Government funding for HSF has subsequently been extended further since March 2022, to March 2026, with over £4 billion distributed nationally to support those in need through the lifetime of HSF.
- 3.5 The aim of the HSF scheme is to provide immediate financial assistance to residents facing financial challenges, ensuring that they have access to essential support such as fuel payments, food vouchers, and funding for basic household items like clothing and small white goods.
- 3.6 HSF is open to all residents experiencing financial hardship, whether they are employed or not, and regardless of whether they are in receipt of benefits. While applicants are not required to be on benefits, they will need to provide evidence of their financial difficulties.

4. Administration of HSF Scheme 2025/2026

Preparation

- 4.1 Previously delivered by Hyndburn Leisure, the administration of the HSF scheme has transferred to the Council for 2025/2026, who will now manage the funding in partnership with local voluntary, community, and faith-based organisations.
- 4.2 The administration of HSF is being undertaken by the Council from within existing resources from Benefits, Revenues, and Customer Contact (BRCC), who have a proven track record of delivering similar support, for example through –
- Covid-19 Test and Trace Support Payments,
 - Covid-19 Business Grants,
 - Council Tax Energy Rebate, and,
 - Discretionary Housing Payments
- 4.3 Given the previous successful delivery of HSF by Hyndburn Leisure since 2021, and, that the initial funding allocation for 2025/2026 was to 30 September 2025, the Council's decision was to administer HSF in the same manner undertaken by Hyndburn Leisure.
- 4.4 This approach would ensure consistency in process for residents, and, allow for a smooth transition of HSF administration to Hyndburn Council.
- 4.5 As part of BRCC preparation for the administration of HSF, a number of actions were taken –
- Regular liaison with Hyndburn Leisure
 - Meetings with Hyndburn Borough Council members

- Representatives from local voluntary, community, and faith-based organisations involved in the provision of food support, and, short term support to residents
- Lancashire County Council HSF District Council groups
- Hyndburn Community Network
- Development of Hyndburn Borough Council website, including online application forms
- Service Level Agreements with relevant organisations

HSF Funding allocation 2025/2026

4.6 The HSF funding allocation available to the Council for 2025/2026 is £439,000, and indicative details of how this will be used are shown below –

<u>Support type</u>	<u>Amount</u>
HBC Administration	£14,000
Discretionary Housing Payment awards	£30,000
Financial, Debt and Budgeting Advice Services	£44,000
Food Grant Network awards	£125,000
HSF Applications awards /Direct Referral awards	£226,000

HSF Award Process

4.7 Access to support through HSF is available through three different routes -

1. Application via Hyndburn Borough Council
2. Direct referral from a partner organisation
3. Food Grant network

Application via Hyndburn Borough Council

4.8 HSF applications via Hyndburn Borough Council can be made by residents individually through an application form that is available on the Cost Of Living support pages on the Council website <https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/costofliving/>

4.9 The application form requests details of the number of residents in the household, the number of children under 18 resident in the household, together with the applicant indicating the support they require is linked to food, energy, or small appliances.

- 4.10 Alongside this support, applicants will also be referred to one of our partner organisations, who can offer further advice and assistance on budgeting, debt management and welfare benefits to help residents maximise their income.

Direct referral from a partner organisation

- 4.11 The Council are working with a number of local voluntary, community, and faith-based organisations, for example, Aawaz, Community Solutions North West, Maundy Relief, Scaitcliffe Community Centre, who can make an HSF applications directly on behalf the resident.
- 4.12 Partner organisations will have already undertaken an assessment of the residents' circumstances, and provided them with further advice on budgeting, debt management and welfare benefits.

Food Grant Network

- 4.13 The Council are working with a number of local voluntary, community, and faith-based organisations involved in the provision of food support, and, short term support to residents.
- 4.14 The Council have distributed almost £100,000 of its current HSF allocation across these organisations in order for them to support residents directly, with the organisations have the discretion to utilise this funding as they consider appropriate.

Value of HSF awards to residents

- 4.15 The table below outlines, the indicative level of HSF award issued by the Council through applications that are made direct, or, from a Direct Referral organisation

<u>Household type</u>	<u>HSF 7 Indicative Standard award</u>
Single Adult (Working age)	£100.00
Couple (Working Age)	£150.00
Single Adult (Pension Age)	£150.00
Couple (Pension age)	£200.00
Additional award if child/children in household	£50.00

- 4.16 From the 100 HSF applications/Direct Referrals received to date, the average level of HSF award is £185.00

- 4.17 In addition, a further £30,000 has been allocated to the Councils Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme, to provide help to eligible residents with housing costs.

Crisis and Resilience Funding (CRF)

- 4.18 Following the completion of the Chancellor's Spending Review, it was announced that HSF will end from 31 March 2025, and be replaced with the introduction of a new fund – the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) – due to start on 1 April 2026.
- 4.19 CRF is likely to also combine Discretionary Housing Payments within the fund, and it is the Government aim to enable local authorities to deliver a more joined-up and streamlined service for residents, making it easier for those in need to access support quickly.
- 4.20 Detailed guidance in relation to CRF has yet to be published. The Council will look to administer CRF in accordance with any relevant guidance.

5. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 N/a

6. Consultations

- 6.1 N/a

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	HSF is fully funded by HM Government
Legal and human rights implications	n/a
Assessment of risk	n/a
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	N/a

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**7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:
List of Background Papers**

7.1 A copy of the Government guidance in relation to HSF is available on the Gov.Uk website - . <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils>

If the report is public, insert the following paragraph. If the report is exempt, contact Member Services for advice.

8. Freedom of Information

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.