

Household Support Fund: Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024)

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Communication	4
Objective and key principles	4
Delivery Plans	5
Working with other organisations	6
Unused funding returned from a TPO	6
Establishing eligibility.....	7
Types of support	8
Funding overlap.....	10
Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds	10
Access to data	11
DWP Searchlight.....	11
Monthly data share.....	11
Reporting and Management Information	12
DWP engagement.....	12
DWP funding arrangements	13
Complying with Subsidy (previously State Aid) rules	16
Administration costs.....	17
Public Sector Equality Duty.....	17
Contact	17

Introduction

1. £842m has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need and to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living via the Household Support Fund (“The Fund”). This funding covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 inclusive (“The Fund Period”). County Councils and Unitary Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the accompanying grant determination and this guidance. This guidance sets out the required collaboration between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), County Councils and Unitary Authorities, including their delivery partners (such as District Councils as well as any charitable or third-party organisations) to successfully meet the policy intent within the agreed framework. It also provides the framework that County Councils and Unitary Authorities need to work within and the arrangements for distribution of funding and reporting.
2. DWP is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs – hereafter referred to as “Authorities”), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer The Fund and provide assistance to households most in need.
3. The expectation is that The Fund should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support. This includes the Cost of Living Payments and the energy support we are providing for 2023/24 set out on [17 November 2022](#) (information on these schemes can be found at Annex A). For the Cost of Living payments this may include, but is not limited to, people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only and people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date. There may be groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through these schemes, for example large families or single-income families. It is important to stress that The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.
4. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low income households during the period of The Fund and Authorities should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy. Support which can make a quick but sustainable impact on energy costs is particularly encouraged; for example, the insulation of hot water tanks, fitting draft excluders to a door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The Fund can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs. The Fund can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this need.
5. Authorities should also consider providing support to disabled people in their area. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges due to the disproportionate impact that rising costs bring for the additional services they need in

order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated. For example, some disabled people may have increased utility bills due to the usage of equipment, aids or adaptations associated with their disability. They may also have additional heating, water or transport costs. Authorities are therefore strongly encouraged to explore ways in which this group may be supported and must record the total value of awards granted to disabled people in their Management Information (MI) returns for this grant.

6. Authorities should also consider providing support to people with caring responsibilities in their area. People with caring responsibilities may be facing acute challenges incurred through their fulfilling these responsibilities for vulnerable citizens due to the disproportionate impact that rising costs may bring for the additional services they need. For example, they may have additional heating, water or transport costs. Authorities are therefore encouraged to explore ways in which this group may be supported.
7. Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers or cash to households, making direct provision of food and goods, or issuing grants to third parties. Every area must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis - in other words, residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is flexibility on exactly how this can be run, including through third parties rather than directly by the Authority. We expect Authorities to offer application-based support throughout the duration of The Fund, either continuously over the majority of The Fund Period or in regular intervals throughout the scheme.
8. Authorities are expected to offer support throughout the duration of The Fund Period and must develop their delivery plans to reflect this.
9. Authorities have access to DWP's Searchlight portal which provides information on individual citizens' entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits.
10. DWP is providing data and information to Authorities to support them to identify those in need in their area. We are providing:
 - information relating to Universal Credit (UC) claims with limited capability for work or earnings below the Free School Meals (FSMs) and free prescription thresholds in their area
 - data on people receiving the Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit elements of Pension Credit
 - data on all claimants on income-related (IR) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA IR).
11. In October 2022, DWP introduced a further data share for those who are only in receipt of HB. This group is not eligible for the up to £900 means-tested Cost of Living Payment. Authorities may find this information useful in identifying those most

in need. Authorities should consider how they could use this data to provide support to this group.

12. However, support is not restricted only to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits. Therefore, Authorities should also use other sources of information to identify vulnerable households, including by taking advice or application referrals from professionals who come into contact with vulnerable households such as social workers, keyworkers delivering early help and family support, health visitors and housing support officers.

13. This guidance applies to Authorities in England only and when finalised should be read in conjunction with the Household Support Fund Grant Determination issued alongside it.

Communication

14. It is mandatory for Authorities to reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases.

15. It is mandatory for Authorities to make public their plans for The Fund, including how and when they intend to deliver the application-based portion of their scheme. This should be through a website page dedicated to the Fund headed with 'Household Support Fund' on their Authority website. This webpage must be easily accessible for residents and outline the Authority's plans for funding, including with details of who is eligible in the area, as well as how and when residents might be able to apply for the application-based element of the scheme. Links to the Government's [Cost of Living Hub](#) should be included, as well as a specific reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government.

16. Authorities should consider inclusive and accessible ways in which they might advertise the availability of The Fund to their residents for example in local family or community hubs and GP surgeries. We expect Authorities to advertise the scheme – and in particular the application-based element of their provision – through various channels and not just online.

Objective and key principles

17. The objective of The Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.

18. Although this is considered an extension to the previous three Household Support Fund schemes, it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions as is set out in the Grant Determination letter. Any underspends from the previous schemes cannot be carried forward.

19. Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2024 and cannot be carried over for future usage. All Authorities are encouraged to ensure, wherever possible, that any vouchers issued are redeemed before the end of The Fund, or shortly thereafter, or consider recycling unused vouchers. It is acceptable for vouchers that have been purchased and delivered to households before the end of The Fund to be spent shortly thereafter (see paragraphs 70 to 74 on committed spend).

20. When administering The Fund, Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles:

- use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information
- use the funding from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. Authorities can also use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials including housing costs where existing housing support does not meet this need

- **Note:** this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

- work together with District Councils and third parties including, where necessary and appropriate, other local services. This may include social workers, housing and family support services and local charities. This may also incorporate intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of The Fund. It may also include receiving referrals for support and applications made on behalf of an individual from professionals working with vulnerable individuals such as social workers, keyworkers delivering early help and family support, health visitors and housing support officers.

21. When deciding how to help people, Authorities should consider:

- how they plan to provide support to vulnerable households, such as by paying into bank accounts, use of cash and vouchers, provision of goods. When determining the most appropriate mechanism of providing support for households, Authorities should consider any potential risks to vulnerable individuals, for example the risk of holding cash, as well as the risk of any potential for fraud
- any fraud risks associated with these payment methods (see section 'Managing the risk of fraud' at paragraphs 76-88 for further information).

Delivery Plans

22. Authorities are required to complete a delivery plan to outline their intentions for The Fund, clearly setting out their priorities and approach for use of the Fund, and to demonstrate the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding.

23. Authorities are required to send the delivery plan to DWP by 17 May 2023. At the end of The Fund we will also ask for a summary of spend against the final delivery plan with this due at the same time as the final MI in April 2024. Delivery plans must be signed off by your Section 151 Officer and responsible Cabinet Member before submission to DWP.

24. Authorities are required to appoint an appropriate Senior Responsible Officer who will be accountable for ensuring a strong delivery plan is developed and agreed through necessary decision making mechanisms including engagement with the

relevant Cabinet Member, and ensuring compliance with and progress against their commitments in the delivery plan

25. We understand that local priorities for The Fund may change over the course of The Fund Period, including in response to local feedback such as from professionals working with households. Authorities should engage with DWP if they wish to revisit their delivery plan during The Fund Period.

Working with other organisations

26. Authorities must work together with District Councils to ensure the funding meets its objectives by identifying those most in need. Authorities must likewise work collaboratively with District Councils and other organisations in their area who may come into contact with those households who may benefit from this grant. Authorities should work closely with third sector and other partner organisations who may come into contact with people in need.

27. Authorities that do not have the mechanisms in place to administer this grant should consider whether District Councils are better placed to do so on their behalf. Authorities are encouraged to engage with District Councils as quickly as possible to ensure roles, responsibilities and effective arrangements are put in place to deliver The Fund promptly and efficiently.

28. Third party organisations (TPOs) may include but are not limited to:

- registered charities and voluntary organisations
- schools
- food banks
- general practitioners
- organisations providing support in particular circumstances (such as but not limited to “baby banks”)

29. Where Authorities are working with TPOs, this should be done on an objectively fair, transparent and non-discriminatory basis whilst having regard to the time available to deliver The Fund. As with District Councils, Authorities should make arrangements with any TPOs as quickly as possible.

Unused funding returned from a TPO

30. Where a TPO returns unused funding before the end of The Fund, the Authority is free to spend that funding in any eligible category for the duration of The Fund Period.

31. Where a TPO returns unused funding after The Fund Period has ended the Authority can re-issue any returned funding within a reasonable timeframe, but only under the same category that the spend was originally reported against. Authorities are able to distribute this funding themselves and do not have to go back through the original TPO.

32. For audit purposes, where an Authority re-issues returned TPO funding after The Fund Period has ended, they must confirm the following by email to **lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk** (copying in their Section 151 Officer):

- the amount that has been returned
- reason for the return (for example TPO underspend)
- what the original spend was reported against in their **final** management information (MI) return
- the intention to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

Establishing eligibility

33. In accordance with their general legal duties, Authorities must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach, including how they are defining eligibility and how households access The Fund. We expect Authorities to review any existing approach and to have a strong rationale for their targeting so that funding is available to the households who most need it.

34. Authorities have the flexibility within The Fund to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal, including through engagement with relevant TPOs, to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households to prevent escalation of problems. Authorities should ensure that they consider the needs of various households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.

35. Authorities should particularly consider how they can support those vulnerable households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living, including:

- amended Energy Price Guarantee from April 2023
- up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments for those on eligible means tested benefits
- £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment
- one-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment (through the Winter Fuel Payment).

Details on these schemes can be found at **Annex A**.

36. Authorities should have regard to the fact that receipt of any of the above support should not exclude a resident from receiving support through The Fund in principle and households in receipt of support from these schemes may still be in need. It remains at the discretion of Authorities to establish their local eligibility and identify those most in need in their area.

37. However, the schemes listed in paragraph 35 do not cover everyone and Authorities should consider prioritising those households, who (for example):

- are eligible for but not claiming qualifying benefits
- become eligible for benefits after the relevant qualifying dates
- are in receipt of Housing Benefit only
- are ordinarily eligible for benefits but who had a nil award in the qualifying period due to, for example, a fluctuation in income.

This list is not exhaustive and there may additionally be households that are vulnerable to rising costs despite being in receipt of this government support with the cost of living.

38. Authorities must operate an application-based service for support to ensure those in need have a route to emergency support. This can be delivered directly by the Authority or by a TPO on their behalf. Authorities should establish eligibility criteria for their application service and should communicate with residents to ensure that their scheme and the mechanism for applying is clear and accessible. Authorities could make the entirety of their scheme application-based. Authorities must make sure that this support is clearly advertised to residents and is available throughout the majority of The Fund Period, either continuously or in regular intervals over the course of the scheme.

39. Where Authorities proactively identify households who may benefit from support, they should consider how they can ensure that they are focusing on those in the most need to prevent escalation of problems. 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. However, in relation to housing costs, Authorities must establish whether other forms of support are available to the household, such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

Types of support

40. Eligible spend includes:

- **energy and water:** The Fund should primarily be used to support energy bills for any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking, or lighting, including oil or portable gas cylinders. It can also be used to support water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, as well as for sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- **food:** The Fund can be used to provide support with food, whether in kind or through vouchers or cash.
- **essentials linked to energy and water:** The Fund can be used to provide support with essentials linked to energy and water (for example warm clothing, blankets, the purchase of equipment such as fridges, freezers, ovens, slow cookers), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access energy, food and water. In particular, we encourage Authorities to consider supporting households on low incomes to repair or replace white goods and appliances with more energy efficient

ones, or to invest in simple energy efficiency measures which will pay back quickly, such as insulating a hot water tank, fitting draft excluders to a front door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The intention of this is to provide sustainable support which could result in both immediate and long-lasting savings for the household.

- **wider essentials.** The Fund can be used to support wider essential needs not linked to energy and water should Authorities consider this appropriate in their area. These may include, but are not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, period and hygiene products, essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle, or paying for fuel. This list is not exhaustive.
- **advice services.** The Fund may be used to provide supplementary advice services to award recipients, including debt and benefit advice, where Authorities consider this appropriate. Authorities are reminded that the primary intention of The Fund is to provide crisis support for households, and we would expect any advice services to complement this. We would not expect a large portion of funding to be spent on advice services. We would expect to see a connection between the funding provided for advice services and the practical support provided under HSF. We anticipate that a significant proportion of this will be through signposting to existing advice services funded through other routes, such as the Help to Claim scheme which supports those making a claim to Universal Credit.
- **housing costs.** The Fund can be used to support housing costs. However, where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the Housing cost element of UC and HB rather than The Fund. In addition, eligibility for DHPs must first be considered before housing support is offered through The Fund. The Authority must also first consider whether the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). It is expected that the focus of support should be on bills and that support for housing costs should only be given where existing housing support schemes do not meet need. Beyond this, Authorities have discretion to determine the most appropriate Fund for their area, based on their understanding of local need and with due regard to equality considerations.
 - Households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through The Fund if it is deemed necessary by their Authority. However, The Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies.
 - Individuals in receipt of some other form of housing support could still qualify for the other elements of The Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.
 - The Fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of The Fund (such as energy, food, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials). Where a homeowner is having difficulty with their mortgage payments, they should contact their lender as soon as possible to

discuss their circumstances as lenders will have a set procedure to assist. Those who are in receipt of or treated as receiving a qualifying benefit could be entitled to [Support for Mortgage Interest](#).

- The Fund can exceptionally and in genuine emergency be used to provide support for historic rent arrears built up prior to an existing benefit claim for households already in receipt of UC and HB. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for DHPs. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.

- **reasonable administrative costs.** This includes reasonable costs incurred administering The Fund. These include for example:
 - staff costs
 - advertising and publicity to raise awareness of The Fund
 - web page design
 - printing application forms
 - small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production

41. There is no prescriptive definition of essentials. Authorities have discretion to assess what is reasonable to assist those in genuine need with regard to the examples above.

42. Individual awards can be whatever type and amount is deemed appropriate by Authorities for the receiving household, bearing in mind the overall spend eligibility priorities listed above and the risk of fraud and error. Awards to any given household can cover several or only one of the spend eligibility categories listed above.

43. Authorities should not make The Fund eligibility conditional on being employed or self-employed, or directly linked to a loss of earnings from employment or self-employment. This will ensure that there is no National Insurance contribution liability payable on any payments by either the citizen, the Authority or employer.

Funding overlap

44. Authorities should consider household circumstances when making a decision on how to spend this grant. Households could be receiving other forms of support, and this should be taken into account to avoid duplicating provision where possible. In particular, Authorities should prioritise those who have not already received additional support for the cost of living. However, households receiving other forms of assistance are not excluded from receiving support through The Fund.

Individuals with no recourse to public funds

45. Authorities can provide a basic safety net support to an individual, regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example if:

- there are community care needs

- they have serious health problems
- there is a risk to a child's wellbeing

46. The rules around immigration status have not changed. Authorities must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance.

Access to data

47. The Household Support Fund is being classified as Local Welfare Provision (LWP). The provision of DWP data to Authorities is under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the 'Department for Work and Pensions and local authorities (LAs) (Access, handling, exchange and protection of DWP's and HM Revenue and Customs' data)'.

48. Authorities who have signed and returned the relevant section (Annex C) of the current DWP/LA MoU have legal permission to access DWP's Searchlight portal and specific UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and HB only data through a monthly data share for the purpose of The Fund.

49. Authorities will need to ensure they sign future iterations of the MoU and the appropriate Annex to continue to have the legal permission to access the data sources for LWP.

50. Staff accessing Searchlight will need to be registered with the Employee Authentication System. Further information on Searchlight can be found in the Local Authority Searchlight Training Pack available in the Searchlight folder on Glasscubes (the LA/DWP online collaboration tool). If your Authority needs to discuss access to Glasscubes, contact DWP at lawelfare.lasupport@dwp.gov.uk

DWP Searchlight

51. This portal provides information on individual citizens' entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Therefore, this data can be used to help Authorities identify and target those families and individuals to support. Authorities may also wish to establish if other forms of support are available to the household. In relation to housing costs this must include checking whether the household could receive DHPs. The Authority must also first consider if the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and, therefore, owed a duty of support through the HPG.

52. Searchlight can only be used to verify a specific individual's DWP benefit information. Therefore, if an Authority identified a group of potential claimants who may be eligible for The Fund from their own records, they can access Searchlight to verify each claimant's DWP benefit entitlement (although benefit entitlement is not a condition of support).

Monthly data share

53. We are providing Authorities with details of UC claimants in their Authority whose income is below the FSM and free prescription thresholds and those with Limited Capability For Work both at individual level and summary level by Ward. We are also providing Authorities with details of those in receipt of Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on ESA (IR). Authorities may find this information useful in

identifying those most in need. We are also providing a further data share for those in receipt of HB only. Individuals in this group are not eligible for a means-tested Cost of Living Payment and so this data share will allow Authorities to identify them and more easily consider their need for support.

54. The UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and HB only data will be provided monthly via Transfer Your File.

55. Authorities will receive two data shares on a monthly basis:

File one - contains individual data of the National Insurance number and names of UC claimants within the Authority area and:

- income below the thresholds of £7,400 per year for FSMs and income below the free prescription threshold of £935 per month as identified in their last UC assessment period
 - those with a Limited Capability for Work indicator within the last assessment period
 - the number of children in the household.
 - those whose award is subject to the benefit cap
 - those with a deduction for Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and who receive Local Housing Allowance
- the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of those in receipt of Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on ESA (IR).
 - the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of customers who are in receipt of HB but not in receipt of a means tested benefit (for example: UC, Income based Jobseekers Allowance, ESA (IR), Income Support and Pension Credit) or Tax Credits.

File two - contains aggregate data showing those UC claimants that are:

- at or below the FSM income threshold
- at or below the free prescription income threshold, and
- in the Limited Capability for Work group.

56. For a full breakdown of the file contents see Local Welfare Provision monthly data share field definitions at Annex B.

57. Authorities also have access to their own non-DWP data to help identify vulnerable households who may be eligible for support under The Fund.

Reporting and Management Information

58. Authorities are required to comply with DWP's reporting and Management Information (MI) requirements. For full details of MI and reporting requirements, see Household Support Fund (2023-2024) MI Reporting requirements.

DWP engagement

59. LA Performance Relationship Managers (PRMs) from DWP's LA Partnership, Engagement and Delivery (LA-PED) division will contact Authorities to provide support and gather information throughout The Fund. LA-PED will contact Authorities for initial compliance (where necessary) including where:

- the MI templates or delivery plans have not been completed and returned,
- the MI templates have not been copied to the Authority's Section 151 Officer or Chief Finance Officer.
- an incorrect template has been used – MI should only be returned on the MI template provided. No local versions or PDF copies are acceptable.

60. They will also contact Authorities where further clarification is needed in respect of the information provided on the MI reporting template, if for example:

- critical data is missing, or the data looks odd
- the Authority is reporting a high value of awards where they have not been able to establish the household composition. We may need the Authority to explain why that is the case and provide supporting evidence.
- the Authority is reporting a high value of administration costs. We may need the Authority to explain why that is the case and provide supporting evidence.
- there is a significant gap between actual and allocated spend. We may need the Authority to explain why spend was so low.

61. They will look to identify good practice and identify case studies where appropriate.

62. DWP will also continue to engage with Authorities throughout the course of The Fund Period and will provide opportunities to engage with the department and other Authorities to share good practice and work collaboratively. DWP will host quarterly Ministerial roundtable events focused on Authority MI returns; where Authorities are invited to these events, an appropriate representative will be expected to attend. DWP will continue to respond to questions we receive via the designated inbox as quickly as possible.

63. Where Authorities work with District Councils and TPOs it is the responsibility of Authorities to collect and collate MI and complete one collated MI return and submit to DWP.

DWP funding arrangements

64. The Fund is ring-fenced to be spent as detailed in this guidance and the accompanying grant determination. To ensure that the objectives of The Fund are being met during the course of the grant and reduce administration costs for all concerned, including the need for DWP to recover underspend, grant payment will be made in arrears upon DWP being satisfied with the MI returns. This will enable DWP to adjust the amount of the payment based on the MI returns.

65. Payment of The Fund from DWP to Authorities will be made in arrears after the interim MI returns in July and October 2023 and January 2024 and the final MI return

at the end of The Fund Period in April 2024 after DWP has verified the MI. If an Authority feels that the payment arrangements will create significant cash flow problems, please notify DWP as soon as possible with supporting evidence. Three interim returns and a final MI return will be required and grant payments will be made in respect of the periods 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023 and 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

66. MI returns must be endorsed by the Section 151 Officer in accordance with their statutory assurance responsibility in order for the grant payment to be made.
67. Authorities must copy their Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer into the email.
68. The guidance for completion is provided within the Household Support Fund (2023-2024) MI Reporting Requirements document.
69. For MI purposes, the definition of spend is grant funding that has been provided to vulnerable households, within the scope of the eligibility criteria, and within The Fund Period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
70. Spend also includes 'committed spend'. For the purpose of The Fund committed spend relates to grant funding that has been spent and delivered to vulnerable households even though the vulnerable household may not have used their grant funding. An example would be the award of a food voucher on 31 March 2024 to a vulnerable household. It would be unreasonable to expect the household to be restricted to redeem the voucher on the day of receipt. In this example, spend has been committed by the Authority, support has been provided to a vulnerable household and, therefore, should be included as eligible grant spend. It would be reasonable to expect the vulnerable household to redeem the food voucher during the month following the end of The Fund.
71. However, committed spend does not include large volumes of food vouchers, procured quite late in The Fund, which cannot be distributed to vulnerable households within the period of The Fund.
72. Authorities that plan to order vouchers in bulk should attempt to be realistic in the volumes ordered to avoid holding large stocks of unused vouchers at the end of The Fund. Alternatively, Authorities may want to consider:
 - purchasing vouchers on a sale or return basis, so that they can return any unused vouchers, or
 - expired vouchers returned to an Authority after The Fund has ended can be recycled and re-issued within a reasonable timeframe but must be done so under the same categories of spend as originally reported and under the same terms as The Fund they were issued under.
73. For audit purposes where an Authority recycles and reuses expired vouchers the Authority must confirm by email to lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk, copying in the Section 151 Officer:
 - the amount that has been returned
 - reason for the return (for example, expired voucher)
 - what the original spend was reported against in their **FINAL MI** return

- confirm they intend to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

74. The definition of committed spend for the purpose of The Fund does not affect its accounting treatment in accordance with normal rules.

75. The timetable for provision of funding is as follows:

Funding:

Payment	Amount	Date	Notes
Interim	Actual grant spend	August/September 2023	Payment made in arrears
Interim	Actual grant spend less any previous interim payment	November/December 2023	Payment made in arrears
Interim	Actual grant spend less any previous interim payment	February/March 2024	Payment made in arrears
Final	Actual grant spend up to 100% of grant allocation* less any previous interim payment	June/July 2024	Payment made in arrears

*Subject to eligible spend criteria

Managing the risk of fraud

76. Fraudsters can target funds of this type.

77. As with any welfare payment to vulnerable recipients there is a risk of fraud, as recipients might appear to be eligible when they are not.

78. To help mitigate this risk, Authorities should involve District Councils and other organisations chosen to administer The Fund to help identify vulnerable families, households and individuals.

79. Authorities wishing to work with TPOs to deliver The Fund must carry out suitable due diligence checks to ensure they are viable and able to deliver the support. So, for example, ensuring all charities are registered and taking extra caution if they are new organisations.

80. Authorities are also encouraged to ensure checks are in place to verify the identity of those eligible.
81. Authorities are encouraged to ask neighbouring Authorities to work together to help prevent double provision and/or no provision – especially where allocation of provision is by school in one area and by residential address in another.
82. It is for Authorities to decide how payments are made to recipients. However, when making decisions, Authorities should consider the risks involved. Although they still carry fraud risks, vouchers should be used instead of cash where possible as this helps to mitigate the risk of the money being spent by the recipient on things outside of the policy intent.
83. Authorities should ensure that they consider and put in place suitable controls when making use of vouchers as part of The Fund. Authorities may wish to consider restricting access to these vouchers; and also consider restricting usage to ensure that they cannot be spent outside the intended scope of The Fund.
84. It is important to be vigilant to fraud and error risks in relation to housing costs, and to assure yourself that the appropriate checks are in place. Authorities should take appropriate steps, which may be requested and reviewed as set out in the grant determination, to ensure they take into consideration household income and rent liability. We expect Authorities to work with district councils to ensure support is going to those with genuine need and to help minimise the risk of fraud on housing support.
85. Where possible, any payments made into a bank account should be in the same name of the person that is eligible for that payment. Authorities have access to a range of data sources, and checks can be carried out against this data to verify the identity of the recipient. Authorities are also encouraged to use existing tools at their disposal to verify personal bank accounts.
86. If the Authority has any grounds for suspecting financial irregularity in the use of any grant paid under the determination, it must notify DWP immediately, explain what steps are being taken to investigate the suspicion and keep DWP informed about the progress of the investigation. For these purposes ‘financial irregularity’ includes fraud or other impropriety, mismanagement, and the use of grant for purposes other than those for which it was provided.
87. If you suspect fraud, you should notify DWP of the:
 - number of instances
 - total amount lost
88. This will help DWP identify any emerging threats and share them with other Authorities, so they can take steps to prevent and detect any fraud in their Fund.

Complying with Subsidy (previously State Aid) rules

89. The funding is intended to benefit households most in need of support with energy bills, food, related essentials, wider essentials and (in limited circumstances where existing housing support does not meet need) housing costs, in order to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. The funds should not be used for any economic undertaking.

90. Whichever way you use the funding, including where you work in partnership with others, you should consider all Subsidy rules (previously State Aid) issues. Check whether the 'de minimis' regulation exception applies. You should also follow government procurement procedures where relevant.

Administration costs

91. The Household Support Fund funding allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable Authorities to deliver The Fund. Authorities should deduct their administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining.
92. In all cases, Authorities should keep administrative costs to a reasonable level.
93. Administration costs for each Authority will be published on www.gov.uk alongside detail of all spend and volumes related to The Fund.

Public Sector Equality Duty

94. In accordance with the public sector equality duty, DWP has had due regard to the potential equalities impacts of this grant.
95. Under the Equality Act 2010, all public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. For the purposes of this grant, you should consider how any support that helps people facing severe financial hardship impacts those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act.
96. When developing your local delivery frameworks, you should ensure people are not disadvantaged or treated unfairly by The Fund. For example, any application process should be easy to access and to navigate.

Contact

97. If you have any queries about the content of this guidance or use of the funding, you can contact lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk

Eligibility for cost of living and energy support

Detailed eligibility requirements for the Cost of Living Payments can be found at:

[Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living-payment)

Further details on the Energy Price Guarantee can be found at

[Energy Price Guarantee - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/energy-price-guarantee)

Local Welfare Provision monthly data share field definitions

The definitions will be updated to include information regarding the additional data share of those who are in receipt of HB only when the details are confirmed.

File 1 – The list of Individuals:

Field Name	Description
claimant1_nino	The national insurance number (NINO) of the lead UC claimant
claimant1_surname	The surname of the lead UC claimant in the Household
claimant1_forename1	The forename of the lead UC claimant in the Household
claimant2_nino	If applicable the NINO of the UC partner in the household. In some cases this may be the same as the UC claimant NINO, usually where the partner NINO data is not available.
claimant2_surname	The surname of the UC partner if Claimant 2 NINO provided
claimant2_forename_1	The forename of the UC partner if Claimant 2 NINO provided
ap_start_date	The start date of the household's UC assessment period (AP)
ap_end_month	This will always be the month of the extract.
has_children_latest_ap	Set to 1 if the UC Household is recorded to have children in the AP used for the extract 1= children 0 = no children
total_children	The number of children recorded in the UC Household for the AP used in the extract, null = no children, the field HAS_CHILDREN_LATEST_AP will also be 0 if there are no children
has_lcw_latest_ap	Set to 1 if a member of the UC Household is in the UC limited capability for work group
eligible_prescription_latest_ap	Set to 1 if the UC Household is below the Free Prescription threshold
earnings_below_fsm_threshold	Set to 1 if the UC Household is below the Free School Meal threshold
country_name	England Scotland Wales
local_authority_name	Your LA name

local_authority_code	the standard lookup code for your authority
tyf_la_id_code	the LA ID code as registered on Transfer Your File for your authority
postcode_outward_code	Postcode sector in the ward
ward_name	Name of the ward
ward_code	Code of the ward
cap_applied	True, False or Null
spare_room_subsidy_removal	True, False or Null
local_housing_allowance_applied	True, False or Null
BENEFIT_TYPE	Will show one of the following: UC PC GC SC SC/GC ESA-IR HB
PC/ESA-IR/HB_NINO	The NINO of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_SURNAME	The surname of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_FORENAME_1	The first name of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_1	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_2	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_3	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_4	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_POSTCODE	The postcode as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_TELEPHONE_NO1	The telephone number of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer as reported on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_TELEPHONE_NO2	The second telephone number (if applicable) of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer as reported on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC_APPOINTEE_SURNAME	If appropriate the surname of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_FORENAME_1	If appropriate the forename of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_1	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_2	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim

PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_3	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_4	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_POSTCODE	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_TELEPHONE_NO1	If appropriate the telephone number of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_TELEPHONE_NO2	If appropriate the second telephone number of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim

File 2 – The Aggregate file

This shows for your Authority:

Country (England, Scotland or Wales)

Local Authority (the name of your Authority)

LOCAL_AUTHORITY_CODE (the standard lookup code for your authority)

TYF_LA_ID_CODE (the Transfer Your File code for your authority)

For each postcode sector (POSTCODE_OUTWARD_CODE) in a ward (WARD_NAME), (WARD_CODE)

Number of Households in the ward with UC Limited Capability to Work group (HAS_LCW_LATEST_AP)

Number of UC households in the Authority without children

(HHS_NO_CHILDREN_IN_LA)

Number of UC households in the Authority with children

(HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_IN_LA)

Number of children in the Authority in UC households with children

(NO_OF_CHILDREN_IN_LA)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(HHS_NO_CHILDREN_PRESC_OR_FSM)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (HHS_NO_CHILDREN_PRESC)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (HHS_NO_CHILDREN_FSM)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_PRESC_OR_FSM)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_PRESC)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (HHS_WITH_CHILDREN_FSM)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold (CHILDREN_PRESCRIPTIONS_OR_FSM)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (CHILDREN_PRESCRIPTION)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (CHILDREN_FSM)