

# Household Support Fund – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 - Member Briefing

## Background

Originally launched in September 2021, the government's Household Support Fund was aimed at providing a bridge between the end of both furlough and the Universal Credit top-up, helping alleviate winter hardship while the economy recovered from Covid.

The fund is now in its fifth round and this briefing outlines how Norfolk County Council will spend its share of the fund for the coming year.

The council will receive £6.7 million from central government to cover a 6-month period to the end of September 2024. The council is providing an additional £435,000 to make the total programme of support worth £7.1 million.

Since the fund began, the council has received over £33 million from the government and has supplemented this support with almost £2.85 million of additional funding. This funding has provided direct support to over 200,000 households.

The announcement of round 5 funding means that by September 2024 the council will have spent £43.45 million on Household Support. Working with partners, we have supported people to buy food, utilities and other crucial supplies. We have also given households access to advice and guidance, and invested in community facilities like food hubs, community hot spots and warm places.

The Fund was due to cease at the end of March 2024, and we lobbied hard for the continuation of this vital support. We were pleased that Government announced in the Spring 2024 Budget a further extension of the scheme. This allows us to continue this valuable programme of support and implement some longer-term solutions to help families to manage the ongoing impact of increased costs of living.

## What approach is Norfolk taking?

The best way for people in need to get help is from organisations that they already know and trust. Voluntary and community organisations, frontline staff in district and county councils and schools are well placed to identify people and families in need and offer support at the right time, before their needs escalate.

This means that Norfolk County Council will continue to work closely with District, Borough and City Councils, the VCSE sector and schools to help those most in need.

Whilst the fund is for immediate help and support, we have attempted to work towards more sustainable solutions that promote independence where we can.

## What support is available?

Based on our experience in previous phases, we expect the funding to provide support to around 50,000 households across Norfolk.

### Support for families who receive Free School Meals £3.6 million

The Council will continue to provide cost-of-living vouchers for free school meals eligible children. The vouchers will be £15 per month per child. There is an additional payment of £15 in July and August for the summer holidays. The vouchers will be paid up to and including September 2024.

The vouchers are provided by Edenred, which can be used in a number of supermarkets for food and groceries.

If families receive a means-tested benefit and are entitled for Free School Meals (Pupil Premium) they will automatically receive the vouchers from their child's school.

Children who are home educated and may be entitled to the vouchers can complete the Norfolk Assistance Scheme form and will be supported to access Edenred by The Client Hardship service. [Find out more about free school meals on our website.](#)

### One-off grant funding pot to enable community-based support £1.35 million

This community-based hardship support fund aims to support local grass roots organisations who are embedded in and working directly with communities. Through this grant programme, we want to ensure that the funding reaches organisations that are best placed to provide direct support to those in need, responding to local intelligence and information. The type of support this grant could be used to fund includes:

- Credit for households to use at food banks
- Providing cash or vouchers to families to pay food and utility bills
- Directly providing food or goods to households
- Issuing small grants to families
- Activities that enable families to better manage the impact of rising living costs, for example supporting families to access benefits and other support

Organisations will be able to bid for between £10,000 and £50,000 by completing an application. All applications will be measured against the bid criteria and vetted by a panel. Priority will be given to activities supporting those who are least able to manage the impacts of the rising cost of living, including (but not limited to) people with:

- higher than average living costs due to needs associated with protected characteristics, for example individuals with severe disabilities and pensioners
- the highest risk of living in poverty, for example those in lower income groups
- responsibilities for others who find it difficult to manage additional costs for example unpaid carers
- a heightened risk of hardship, for example those who are socially isolated or care leavers

## **Support targeted to voluntary and community groups £0.8 million**

Norfolk Community Foundation will once more deliver funding to communities in need, but who might not be accessing more formal statutory provision. This support will be delivered to households through the community groups and charities they are connected with.

## **Local support in the community provided by district councils £0.7 million**

Funding has been divided up in proportion to the number of Universal Credit and Pension Credit claimants in each district as follows:

Norwich	£143,535
Great Yarmouth	£125,300
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	£113,575
Breckland	£100,275
South Norfolk	£79,765
Broadland	£68,355
North Norfolk	£69,195

City, district, and borough councils are using their in-depth knowledge about their residents and local community to proactively target support to where it is most needed. This support will be delivered through existing local organisations and council services who come across individuals and families in need. City, district, and borough councils will be in touch directly with partner organisations with more detail about their individual schemes. Links to local council officers for more information can be found at the end of this briefing. To ensure adequate funds are allocated at a local level we will continue to review demand and spend with each local council and adjust accordingly.

## **Client Hardship Service (CHS) £0.435 million**

The Client Hardship service already provides hardship support to Norfolk residents who are struggling with their living costs. The service will now receive additional funds to be able to support more people over the next year. This is in addition to the £1.21m NCC (Norfolk County Council) funding already provided, making total funding for the service of £1.645m for 2024/25.

[Client Hardship Service – Norfolk County Council](#)

## **Adult Learning £0.15 million**

Adult Learning has also received funding to expand their programme of money management, cooking on a budget, and [other related courses](#).

### **Support available from libraries £0.05 million**

Norfolk's network of 47 libraries will continue their range of community services. This support includes free hygiene packs with essential toiletry and sanitary products. People will be able to go to libraries and pick up these packs in a discreet way when they need them. You can [find out more](#) on our website.

### **Funding Impact Evaluation £0.05 million**

The Government has asked local authorities to carry out evaluation activities to help understand the impact of the funding. Some money has been set aside from the funding (as suggested by DWP (Department for Work and Pensions)) to carry out this analysis throughout the grant period.

### **How long is this funding in place?**

This additional Government funding for household support ends in September 2024. Vouchers/ grants can be distributed until the end of September 2024 and must be redeemed/ fully spent before the end of October 2024. Edenred vouchers will expire on 30 October 2024. We will review the demand and funding allocations at the end of July to reprofile to meet need as necessary.

### **How can people access support?**

People can go to [www.norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving) to find out how to access the support available. Organisations and support workers can also do this on people's behalf. If people have problems accessing online services, then they can visit their local library or call us on 0344 800 8020.

### **What can I do to help?**

If you are working with, or aware of, a family who you think may be eligible for free school meals, who are not currently receiving them, please encourage them to speak to their children's education provider or support them in that conversation where needed.

Please direct people to the website [www.norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving) so that they can find the right support for their needs.

### **Who can I contact for further information?**

- Hardship Support General Information – Hannah Edge, Head of Communities and Customer Services, Norfolk County Council [Hannah.edge@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.edge@norfolk.gov.uk)
- Client Hardship Service and the support on offer - John Baldwin, Head of Finance Exchequer Services [john.baldwin@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:john.baldwin@norfolk.gov.uk)

- Free School Meal vouchers and support for families – [philip.beck@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:philip.beck@norfolk.gov.uk)
- Broadland Council's support offer - [Mike.Pursehouse@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:Mike.Pursehouse@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk)
- Breckland Council's support offer – [Jessica.Creighton@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:Jessica.Creighton@breckland.gov.uk)
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council's support offer – Steve Scott-Greenard  
[earlyhelphub@great-yarmouth.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelphub@great-yarmouth.gov.uk) 0808 196 2238
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's support offer - [Judith.Berry@West-Norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Berry@West-Norfolk.gov.uk)
- Norwich City Council's support offer – [covidhub@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:covidhub@norwich.gov.uk)
- South Norfolk Council's support offer -  
[Mike.Pursehouse@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:Mike.Pursehouse@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk)
- North Norfolk District Council's support offer - [Sonia.Shuter@north-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Sonia.Shuter@north-norfolk.gov.uk)

April 2024