

REPORT TO: Corporate & Inclusion Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 4 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Update regarding the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments as at 30 September 2025

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund and progress with Discretionary Housing Payments between 1 April 2025 and 30 September 2025.
- 1.2 To outline the latest information available regarding replacement of the Household Support Fund with the Crisis and Resilience Fund with effect from 1 April 2026.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That:

- (i) **The updated position regarding the Household Support Fund as at 30 September 2025 be noted;**
- (ii) **The spending position for Discretionary Housing Payments as at 30 September 2025 be noted;**
- (iii) **The latest information regarding the introduction of the Crisis and Resilience Fund from 1 April 2026 be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Household Support Fund No.7

- 3.1 A report was presented to the Board on 3 June 2025 detailing the spending plan for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 for the Household Support Fund. This report provides an update, setting out the spend position for the six-month period to 30 September 2025.
- 3.2 In summary, spending to date has been as follows.
 - The Discretionary Support Scheme has paid out £44,000 which covers emergency support and community support.
 - Expenditure on free school meal vouchers for the school holidays is now £777,296 which represents 9 weeks of school holidays.
 - Public Health have spent £24,460 helping vulnerable residents.

- Halton Citizens Advice Bureau have spent £56,935 on a range of support for vulnerable residents such as fuel vouchers, food vouchers, and kitchen equipment.
- Children's Services have spent £11,671 in respect of support for Care Leavers.
- Widnes food bank have spent £17,294.
- Runcorn food bank have spent £7,429.
- The Holiday Activity Food Programme have spent £10,000.

The Appendix provides details the updated spend position for the Household Support Fund for the six month period to 30 September 2025.

Discretionary Housing Payment 2025/26

- 3.3 Every year the Government provides the Council with a Discretionary Housing Payment allocation and for 2025/26 the amount provided is £279,321.
- 3.4 Discretionary Housing Payments provide claimants with further financial assistance, in addition to any welfare benefits, when the Council considers that help with housing costs is required.
- 3.5 Discretionary Housing Payments are available to claimants who are entitled to:
- Housing Benefit or
 - Universal Credit and
 - have a rental liability and
 - require further financial assistance with housing costs.
- 3.6 In general, housing costs means rental liability. However, housing costs can be interpreted more widely to include:
- Rent deposits
 - Rent paid in advance
 - Other costs such as removal costs.
- 3.7 The tables below show the amount and numbers of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) awards the Council has made during the six month period to 30 September 2025.

DHP expenditure as at 30 September 2025

Govt DHP allocation	DHP awarded to date	DHP unallocated
£279,321	£136,990	£142,331

Number of DHP awards as at 30 September 2025

	Housing Benefit claimants	Universal Credit claimants	Total
No. of awards	34	243	277

The Crisis and Resilience Fund

- 3.8 The Government is replacing both the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments with a new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) from 1st April 2026.
- 3.9 The Government states that the CRF will mark a significant shift in how crisis support will be delivered locally, combining emergency support with preventative approaches to build financial resilience.
- 3.10 The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) is currently developing the CRF with input from a small number of local authorities. The DWP have informed local authorities that they are proposing a phased approach to integrating Discretionary Housing Payments within CRF. This means for the financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 the allocation of DHPs will be maintained at the 2025/26 level.
- 3.11 Further details will be presented to the Board once the DWP issues definitive guidance regarding how the CRF will operate and the Council is informed of its funding allocation for 2026/27.

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**
- 5.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**
- 5.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
- 5.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**
- 5.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
- 5.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

The delivery of support from the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments to the Borough's most vulnerable households, has the potential to support all of the Council's priorities.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 If the grant allocations from the Household Support Fund and for Discretionary Housing Payments are not fully utilised in accordance with the DWP guidance by 31 March 2026, any remaining grant funding will be clawed back by the DWP.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payment Allocations	DCBL Stadium Lowerhouse Lane Widnes	Paul Garnett

APPENDIX

Household Support Fund Spend for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025

Total Grant Allocation	£ 2,287,475
Less Administration Costs (5%)	114,374
Available Grant Funding	2,173,101
1. Vulnerable Households with Children	
Free school meal vouchers for school holidays: Easter holidays 7 th – 18 th April 2025 (2 weeks) Half term 26 th – 30 th May 2025 (1 week) Summer holidays 23 rd July – 29 th August 2025 (6 weeks) Autumn half term 27 th – 31 st October 2025 (1 week) Christmas holidays 22 nd December 2025 – 2 nd Jan 2026 (2 weeks) Half term 16 th – 20 th February 2026 (1 week) Based upon an estimated 7,500 children entitled to FSM paid for 13 weeks at £12 per voucher per week	777,296
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households Based on 4,200 pensioner households receiving CTR/HB award of £120 per pensioner	0
3. Discretionary Support Scheme Accessed by application	44,000
4. Public Health – Other Vulnerable Households Contact – Jayne Hardman	24,460
5. Public Health - Pre-school Age Children Contact - Matt Hancock	0
6. Care Leavers Contact – Emma Wright	11,671
7. Other Vulnerable Households Halton Citizens Advice Bureau Widnes Food Bank Runcorn Food Bank Holiday Activity Food programme Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus Halton Voluntary Action	56,935 17,294 7,429 10,000 0 0
Total spend	949,085