



Issue details	
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Officer responsible:	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Customer Services, Fraud & Compliance
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History of most recent Policy Changes – Must be completed			
Date	Section	Change	Origin of change (eg change in legislation)

East Devon District Council - HSF

1 Why has the council introduced this policy?

This policy has been introduced as further funding has been provided by Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to Devon County Council who have allocated us a proportion of the fund to help low income households in our district. The HSF is being delivered under a Team Devon joint framework agreement.

Guidance issued by the DWP on 26 March 2024 has confirmed that the scheme is to be used to help those most in need with the cost of essentials during the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

The Devon framework approach for the HSF hardship fund is shown in appendix 1.

2 What is the council's policy?

2.1 The Household Support Fund

As part of the Team Devon framework agreement we have been provided with funding to supply financial assistance to households who may struggle with the cost of essentials covering the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

2.2 Types of assistance that can be provided

This scheme is designed to help ease financial pressure on households with low incomes and to support those most in need. The scheme offers a one-off financial support payment to assist with meeting basic living needs including:

- **Food** – this could be through a variety of methods including bank transfer, vouchers, cash or a food parcel (dependant on local arrangements)
- **Energy and water bills**- support with 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 with water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, and sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- **Essentials linked to energy and water** - including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase or repair of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, thermostatically controlled radiators, insulation and other small measures to help reduce energy consumption.
- **Wider essentials** – support with essential household items which may include, but are not limited to, support with other essential

monthly expenditure which cannot be deferred including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for a monthly bus pass.

- **Housing costs** - in exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs with the following caveats;

- Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB) rather than the Household Support Fund.
- Eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support 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).
- In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through the Household Support 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 Household Support Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.
- 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 Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.

Our scheme is in two parts:

- Direct and targeted funding for those we have identified as eligible for financial support
- An open application based service

Targeted Support

Part 1 – Targeted Support

A one off payment of £100 will be made to those residents who meet the following conditions.

1. In receipt of full Housing Benefit or full Council Tax Reduction and
2. Have under £3,000 in capital and
3. Have someone living in the household who is disabled or a carer or
4. Care leavers who are in receipt of a Council Tax relief and other district benefits such as Discretionary Housing Payment.

Part 2 - Direct Applications

An on-line application will be available for residents to apply directly to the fund.

We recognise that we cannot predict every challenge that residents may face, so we will be accepting applications for other essential types of support which cannot be budgeted for and which deliver on the aims of this scheme. These items will be considered on a case-by-case basis

2.3 Who is eligible?

Our eligibility criteria balances supporting as many residents as we can with targeting our limited funds to support those who need our help the most.

Applicants must:

1. Be 16 years or over, and
2. Live within boundaries of East Devon District Council (as their main residence); and
3. Evidence being without sufficient resources to meet the immediate short-term needs of themselves or dependents and
4. Be identified from our existing data sets or via an application process (whichever is being operated by the district/city council)

For part 1 of the targeted support we will determine eligibility based on our records as at 01 June 2024.

2.4 What can not be awarded?

The scheme will not award:

- Mortgage support - homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the Fund (such as food, energy, 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.

- Payments for debt and money advice services

2.5 How will payments be made?

Payment will normally be made via vouchers or by invoices for payment being sent directly to East Devon District Council. (e.g. supermarket e-vouchers will be supplied to the applicant via e-mail, or payment for a taxi to a medical appointment will be invoiced to the Council).

Targeted support payments will be made directly into bank accounts via BACS or through the Post Office Pay Out voucher scheme.

In very exceptional circumstances a cash payment may be made after all other means of payment have been explored (this cannot be paid into a third-party account). All awards from the fund will be made as quickly as possible to meet the agreed needs of the household. We also reserve the right to provide 'in-kind' support where this is appropriate.

2.6 How do I apply?

Applications may be made online or by telephone. There is telephone support available for those who require assistance to complete the form. Applications can be made by the applicant or their appointee, carer, advocate or a third party acting on their behalf. We also allow direct referrals from trusted partners through our online application system.

For all residents who have been allocated an award through our targeted approach a letter with a code will be sent to the address held on our records to allow the funds to be claimed before payment can be released.

2.6 What information will I need to provide?

Open applications

In order to make an assessment of the household needs and priorities, the Council will require you to provide some information. This may include details of who is living within the household, your income and details of any savings and the circumstances along with the reasons that led to an application being made. We will also need some practical information, such as your National Insurance number and contact details.

We will also require you to provide supporting evidence and information as deemed necessary by the officer assessing the application. This could include recent bank statements.

Targeted Support

An online application process for targeted support will be in place with the resident required to confirm that their circumstances are as held on our records, and they are therefore eligible for the payment.

2.7 Assessment process

Targeted support will be automatically awarded and will not be subject to an assessment process unless required due to discrepancies in the information supplied by the applicant.

For open applications once a completed application is received, the details will be passed on to an advisor within our Financial Resilience Team. The advisor will make contact with the applicant via telephone to discuss the situation in further detail, as well as using the information provided in the application form and any other information available to them. The advisor will also take into account all of the circumstances and reasons that led to an application being made.

In making a decision on whether to make an award from the scheme and the amount to be awarded the advisor will consider the eligibility criteria and our approach to prioritisation, as well as the funds that we have available at the time of application. Once we have assessed whether the application falls within our eligibility criteria, we will consider whether the applicant meets one or more of our prioritisation criteria.

Our advisors will also consider all the information at their disposal to assess the risk faced by the applicant and the relative priority of their application including but not limited to:

- Financial circumstances
- Access to other forms of financial support
- Circumstances and reasons for the claim
- Preventative measures taken by the applicant or partner
- Impact of making or not making of the award
- The budgetary situation of the fund

If the advisor feels that there are sufficient grounds for an award to be made based on priority and vulnerability they will then consider the amount of the award.

2.8 Calculating the amount of an award

As part of the application, you will be asked to give an indication of the support that is required. However, the assessing advisor will determine

the amount of support based on local economic factors and arrangements in place with other agencies/retailers. It will not always be possible to provide the full amount due to the limited funds we have available.

Targeted support

See section 2.2.

2.9 Advising you of a decision

Once the advisor has made a decision on your application we will give you a written notice advising you:

- Whether an award has been made and the reason for the decision
- The intended use of the award
- The amount of the award

We will also let you know about other services in the council and the community which may be able to provide further support. We will also advise you as to how the award will be made.

2.10 Reviewing unsuccessful applications

The scheme is discretionary and there are no appeal rights to an Independent Tribunal, but you can ask us to look at your case again within 5 days of our decision if you are not happy with the outcome of your application. Requests for a review of our decision need to be made in writing. It must state the reasons why you are asking for a review of the decision and be signed and dated.

You will be notified of the review decision within 14 days of your request. This decision will be final. If you do not have access to a computer, you can get in touch with us and we will advise you on how you can request a review.

2.11 How often can I apply?

Support will usually be provided from the fund once. In exceptional circumstances repeat applications will be considered on merit. In the case of repeat applications further work and referrals to other agencies will be discussed with the applicant and may be conditional on having further financial support (e.g. referrals to Citizens Advice).

3. Other information about the scheme

The Household Support Fund is a fixed amount of money made available to local authorities by the Department for Work and Pensions. As funds are limited, the council will prioritise those households facing

the greatest need. The scheme is due to run until 30 September 2024 but once all funds have been allocated, the fund will be closed. In order to maximise the support we can provide to all our residents we will always redirect residents to other forms of support where we feel this is more appropriate to support their needs.

Due to the limited amount of funds we have available, we will prioritise items necessary for day to day living such as food and essential household items.

In line with the principles of good administration, all applications will be treated fairly and consistently under the terms we have set out here. Applications will be processed in a timely manner.

We will monitor this scheme on an ongoing basis. We will regularly review the scheme to ensure that we are making the best use of the money we have available. To support our monitoring and evaluation, we may get in touch with applicants after decisions on awards have been made in order to ask for feedback about the scheme and may also share your data with other colleagues in the council to support our monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

4. How will we use & share your information

The Council will only collect data relevant to your Household Support Fund application. Your data will be held on our digital platform and will be protected using up-to-date technical and organisational security measures.

Your data will be used to:

- Determine your eligibility for the Household Support Fund
- Contact you about decisions or updates related to an application
- Issue the Household Support Fund payment to your nominated Bank or Building Society account where appropriate

Your personal data will not be kept longer than necessary (in line with our existing retention schedule).

Information collected during the application process will be used to assess an applicants' claim. Information will be cross matched with other data held by the Council and third-party agencies e.g. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) for verification purposes.

The Council may also share data with both internal and external organisations for the purposes of validating any applications you may make or have made for other Council services such as Housing Applications, School Placements, Homeless Applications.

In addition, we may also share your data within the organisation to support our efforts to redirect you to other support that may be available (for example our Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme, Council Tax Reduction Scheme).

With your permission we may share your data with partner agencies to enable them to provide the necessary support in order to achieve long term outcomes in building financial resilience (for example Exeter community energy, Citizens Advice East Devon, South West Water).

We may also share your data within the organisation or with other Government agencies in order to prevent and/or detect potentially fraudulent activity. Subject to a legal gateway, your information may also be shared for the prevention of fraud and criminal activity with but not limited to:

- The police
- Immigration Service, Absconder Services and/or UK Border Agency
- Health and social care organisations
- Other Local Authorities

We will also share anonymised monitoring data with the DWP in order to complete the monitoring returns required to confirm how the funding has been allocated to residents.

5. Fraud

The Council is committed to tackling and preventing fraud in all its forms. If a claimant attempts to claim an award from the Household Support Fund by making a false declaration or providing false evidence or statements, they may have committed an offence. Where the Council suspects that fraud may have occurred it will investigate the matter as appropriate, and this may lead to criminal proceedings.

6. Where can I get help with other costs that aren't included within the Fund?

The Department for Work and Pensions are responsible for providing a number of payments and advances for those who meet the eligibility criteria.

These include:

- Funeral Payments
- Sure Start Maternity Grant
- Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments
- Short-term Benefit Advances
- Budgeting Advances

For further information please speak to your local JobCentre Plus office.

7. What other support is available?

Further information on what financial support is available for individuals and families in Devon can be found at;

- East Devon District Council Financial Support and Advice at [Financial Support and Advice - East Devon](#)
- The government's Help for households campaign at [Help for Households - Get government cost of living support](#)
- Money Navigator Tool at [Money Navigator | Coronavirus financial guidance | MoneyHelper](#)

8. Policy Administration

Appendices and other relevant information

Appendix 1 – Household Support Fund (HSF5): Devon's approach

Links related Policies/Strategies, Procedures and Legislation

9. Data Protection

Provide a general view of what personal data is to be used and how and provide a link to the [Council's Data Protection Policy](#) and reference the relevant privacy notices.

10. Policy consultation

Cabinet 05 June 2024

Policy review

Libby Jarrett, Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Fraud and Compliance. ljarrett@eastdevon.gov.uk

Household Support Fund (HSF5): Devon's approach

Context

Devon County Council (DCC) has been awarded funding of £5,064,876.12 by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for a fifth Household Support Fund (HSF5) for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024. The HSF5 must be spent or committed by 30th September 2024 and cannot be held over for future usage. As HSF5 is a finite fund: once the money has been spent the fund will close (this potentially therefore may be earlier than 30th September 2024). This HSF5 allocation covers the DCC administrative area of Devon (You can contact Torbay Council and/or Plymouth City Council to request information on their respective HSF5 approach.).

The fund is designed to provide rapid short-term financial support to address economic vulnerability and financial hardship. It should be used to support households who are struggling to meet their food, energy, water and other essential living needs. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

Deployment of Household Support Funds

As the DWP payment to Devon will be in arrears and subject to DCC submitting timely management information (MI) returns, Devon must have a robust policy and process in place to meet the DWP requirements.

DCC has worked with district/city councils and other partners to identify households experiencing financial hardship. The approach to deploy the HSF5 is on the following basis:

- **Free School Meal (FSM) Holiday Food Vouchers:**

If a child/young person in a household qualifies for Free School Meals in term time, then currently the child/young person automatically qualifies for free school meal holiday vouchers (These vouchers are funded by HSF5). The vouchers ensure families of children/young people eligible for free school meals during term time, are also able to purchase food over the holidays to replace the meals a child/young person would have received during a school day. Households currently in receipt of free school meals are eligible for a supermarket voucher to the value of £15 per child per week of the school holidays (7 weeks holiday in total for this HSF5 funding period), to help pay for groceries over the break. The vouchers will automatically be distributed to eligible households prior to the May half-term (1 week) and summer holiday (6 weeks).

Further information on applying for Free School Meals: [Free school meals - Support for schools and settings \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/free-school-meals-support-for-schools-and-settings)

- **Team Devon District / City Council Hardship Schemes**

All district/city councils will be provided with a funding allocation based on the universal credit uptake in their respective areas, enabling each of them to either:

1. provide direct and targeted financial help and assistance to households who they have identified via data held as eligible against their criteria and who are vulnerable and struggling financially to

secure food, water, energy, essential and exceptional (e.g. rent arrears prior to being in receipt of appropriate housing benefits) provisions

and/or

2. to operate an open application based scheme.

NB: for direct and targeted work, the district/city council will use appropriate and accessible datasets, which are compliant with data protection requirements, to proactively identify vulnerable and in need households; making contact with them and offering 'one-off' financial assistance.

Visit the Cost of Living pages on your district council's pages to find out more about support in your local area.

- [East Devon](#)
- [Exeter](#)
- [Mid Devon](#)
- [North Devon](#)
- [South Hams](#)
- [Teignbridge](#)
- [Torridge](#)
- [West Devon](#)

- **Citizens Advice Devon (CA Devon) Energy Relief Scheme (pre-payment and credit meters)**

CA Devon will manage an Energy Relief Scheme for those using pre-payment / credit meters and who are struggling to meet their energy needs. Such meters are often used by those struggling to meet their energy needs and those on the lowest incomes; often resulting in them paying more for their energy requirements. A mixture of households will be helped in this way. The scheme runs until 30th September 2024 but may close earlier if the fund has been dispersed fully.

For further information: [About Us - Citizens Advice Devon \(cabdevon.org.uk\)](https://www.cabdevon.org.uk)

- **DCC Early Help – Families on low incomes can get help with food and utility costs, which Early Help are administering locally.**

Through this fund, Early Help is able to provide a support grant to eligible households. Referral applications can be made via a professional working with the family concerned. The scheme runs until 30th September 2024 or may close earlier if the funds have been dispersed and are exhausted.

Further information: [Early Help Household Support Fund - Devon Children and Families Partnership \(dcfp.org.uk\)](https://www.dcfp.org.uk)

- **Devon Community Foundation** will deploy funds to voluntary and community organisations that support specific groups who may struggle to access the help and support they need.

Communication

Communication will be released (via DCC and partners' websites and communication channels) on the HSF5 allocation for Devon and the support gateways put in place to support households. Where appropriate, further direct, timely and specific communication to the individual households concerned will then follow nearer to the actual implementation of the above initiatives.

It is mandatory for Authorities to reference that the grant is funded by the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases. This includes use of logos as per the [Funded by UK Government Branding Manual](#) provided to all Authorities. This requirement extends to other public bodies (such as District Councils) delivering the scheme on behalf of the Authority.

Ongoing Review

Following a review of the above actions and the subsequent confirmation of the funds being dispersed in the way described, and assuming HSF funds still remain available, a further review and deployment of the HSF will then be considered.

District / City (Team Devon) Council Hardship Schemes: Local Approach

The remainder of this document outlines the Team Devon agreed policy approach to administering this fund to ensure a degree of consistency in relation to delivery across Devon district and city councils.

Each District Council will provide a HSF5 hardship scheme; the latter will be finalised via the respective Council's governance and decision-making procedures; ensuring open, transparent and informed decision-making in this regard.

All district/city councils will be provided with a funding allocation based on the universal credit uptake in their respective areas, enabling each of them to either:

1. provide direct and targeted financial help and assistance to households who they have identified via data held as eligible against their criteria and who are vulnerable and struggling financially to secure food, water, energy, essential and exceptional (e.g. rent arrears prior to being in receipt of appropriate housing benefits) provisions

and/or

2. to operate an open application based scheme.

NB: If conducting direct and targeted support, district / city councils will use appropriate and accessible datasets, which are compliant with data protection requirements, to proactively identify vulnerable and in need households; making contact with them and offering 'one-off'

financial assistance. In particular, district/city councils will look to identify and help those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need.

Those eligible for support may contact the respective district/city council to decline any financial offer, if they so wish. On receipt of such a notification the respective council will take steps to ensure the eligible household does not receive a support payment.

Visit the Cost of Living pages on your district council's pages to find out more about support in your local area.

- [East Devon](#)
- [Exeter](#)
- [Mid Devon](#)
- [North Devon](#)
- [South Hams](#)
- [Teignbridge](#)
- [Torridge](#)
- [West Devon](#)

Devon care leavers (i.e. people who have experienced care in Devon which is deemed a potential source of discrimination), who are in receipt of Council Tax Relief and other district benefits (such as Discretionary Housing Payments), will be included in a District's priority group to receive HSF support and assistance, and will be approached by the respective District. Districts will capture the number of Care Leavers receiving support under HSF5 and provide this to Devon County halfway through the scheme and at the end; at the same time as MI returns are provided.

As HSF5 is a finite fund, once the money has been spent the fund will close. The closing date may therefore be earlier than 30th September 2024, which is the date the HSF5 funding period ends officially.

1. Communication

Communication will be released (via DCC and partners' websites and communication channels) on the HSF5 allocation for Devon and the support gateways put in place to support households. Where appropriate, further direct, timely and specific communication to the individual households concerned will then follow nearer to the actual implementation of the above initiatives.

It is mandatory for Authorities to reference that the grant is funded by the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases. This includes use of logos as per the [Funded by UK Government Branding Manual](#) provided to all Authorities. This requirement extends to other public bodies (such as District Councils) delivering the scheme on behalf of the Authority.

2. Types of assistance that can be provided

This scheme is designed to help ease financial pressure on households with low incomes and to support those most in need over this period. The scheme offers a one-off financial support payment to assist with meeting basic living needs including:

- **Food** – this could be through a variety of methods including bank transfer, vouchers, cash or a food parcel (dependant on local arrangements)
- **Energy and water bills**- support with 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 with water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, and sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- **Essentials linked to energy and water** - including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase or repair of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, thermostatically controlled radiators, insulation and other small measures to help reduce energy consumption.
- **Wider essentials** – support with essential household items which may include, but are not limited to, support with other essential monthly expenditure which cannot be deferred including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for a monthly bus pass.

- Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB) rather than the Household Support Fund.
- Eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support 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).
- In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through the Household Support 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 Household Support Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.
- 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 Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.

- **Housing costs** - in exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs with the following caveats:
- **Advice** - The vast majority of HSF5 funding needs to be allocated to providing financial support to eligible households in need. Any supplementary advice services need to be connected to the practical financial support provided, and be reasonable and proportionate. In the main, households eligible for HSF5 financial support will be signposted to existing advice services funded through other routes, such as the Help to Claim scheme which supports those making a claim to Universal Credit (UC), Citizens Advice Devon and CHAT (Mid-Devon).

3. Eligibility

Prospective eligible households (the applicant or recipient) must:

1. be 16 years or over; and
2. Live in a Devon district/city council area (as their main residence); and
3. Evidence being without sufficient resources to meet the immediate short-term needs of themselves or dependents and
4. Be identified from existing data sets or via an application process (whichever is being operated by the district/city council), as meeting the respective eligibility criteria

4. Process

The district/city council's eligibility criteria and process will be defined clearly on its website. Districts may contact a potential household recipient to proactively offer direct financial assistance; basing such contact on local data and intelligence indicating that the household may be struggling to meet their basic living needs. Where an open application process is being operated by the district/city council, only one application per household will be allowed (see Section 6 for exceptions). An application can be made by a household member or their appointee, carer, advocate or a third party acting on the household's behalf. Direct referrals from trusted third party partners will be encouraged to avoid unnecessary duplication.

5. Award levels and restrictions

- There is no maximum award level as it is a discretionary fund determined on a case-by-case basis according to need as evidenced. Some districts may have a 2-step process in place (decision and sign off) involving a front-line assessor and manager; where an award is over an agreed amount.
- Awards are made in a variety of methods (including cash via BACS payment, pre-paid cards, vouchers) depending on existing local arrangements/processes.

Financial Awards to qualifying households cannot be used to pay for Mortgage support - 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. However households could still qualify for other eligible elements of the Fund (such as support for food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials).

District Councils will also seek to sign-post applicants to other sources of help and support, especially in relation to advice, such as Citizens Advice Devon, CHAT (Mid Devon).

6. Repeat Awards

Support will be provided from the fund once only in any 6 month period. In exceptional circumstances repeat awards may be considered on merit. In such cases, further work and referrals to other agencies will be discussed with the recipient and may be conditional on having further financial support (e.g. such as being referred to Citizens Advice Devon).

7. Fraud

Where the district/city council operates an application process, questions will be asked or evidence sought to establish the facts before making a decision to grant an award to an applicant. Failure by the prospective recipient to disclose a material fact or to make a false application or provide false information will be treated as a fraudulent act. Where fraud has been detected the recipient/applicant will be refused any further assistance and where appropriate, the district/city council may prosecute them.

8. Award Process

Where an open application process is being operated by the district/city council, each case will be assessed. Further information may be requested to enable an accurate assessment.

As part of the assessment, relevant information and data will be taken into account such as:

- The prospective recipient's financial circumstances and those of their household members
- The prospective recipient's access to other forms of financial support
- The circumstances and reasons associated with the case
- Preventative measures taken by the prospective recipient and their household members
- The potential impact of making or not making the award
- The budgetary situation of the fund

A declaration will be signed by the recipient which will allow the Council to share information with third parties to help prevent fraud. Records will be kept on each case received for the duration of the scheme.

9. Data

(Suggested text follows but local subsidiarity will apply, with local circumstances published by the district/city council on its website)

- The types of information required to determine eligibility may vary between district/city councils according to local processes – but any request for supporting evidence will be reasonable and proportionate according to the merits of the case.

- For the purposes of this scheme district/city councils will only collect data relevant to a household's application.
- Data will be held on the relevant district/city council's digital platform and will be protected using up-to-date technical and organisational security measures
- Data will be used to
 - Determine eligibility for the Household Support Fund
 - Make contact about decisions or updates related to the prospective recipient and/or application
 - Issue the Household Support Fund payment to a nominated Bank or Building Society account where appropriate
- Data may be shared with both internal and external organisations for the purposes of validating any applications. Information will be cross matched with other data held by the council and third-party agencies e.g. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) for verification purposes.
- Data may be shared within the organisation to support efforts to redirect an applicant to other support that may be available.
- Data may also be shared within the organisation or with other Government agencies in order to prevent and/or detect potentially fraudulent activity. Subject to a legal gateway, information may also be shared for the prevention of fraud and criminal activity with (list not exhaustive):
 - The police
 - Immigration service, absconder services and/or UK Border Agency
 - Health and social care organisations
 - Other local authorities and public agencies
- Personal data will not be kept longer than necessary (according to each Districts retention schedule)

10. Monitoring and Reporting

District/city councils are required to complete the standard Management Information (MI) reporting template provided by DWP to record the amount provided or paid to vulnerable households under the remit of this HSF5 grant scheme. DCC will make one MI return on behalf of Devon in accordance with the specified dates set out by the DWP. Guidance around monitoring and reporting spend will be agreed with district/city councils in a separate document.

In addition to the MI reporting, Districts will capture the number of Care Leavers receiving support under HSF5 and provide this to Devon County halfway through the scheme and at the end; at the same time as MI returns are provided.

11. Funding model

Allocations of funds to DCC from DWP is on a payment in arrears basis; on the condition that accurate management information is submitted according to the timetable (outlined below) and specific support targets are met.

MI Return	Reporting period: from	Reporting period: to	Deadline
Interim 1	1 April 2024	30 June 2024	8 July 2024
Final Return	1 April 2024	30 September 2024	10 October 2024

In turn, DCC will make staged payments to district/city councils, in arrears, via a standard grant agreement once payment has been received from DWP. The Fund and its deployment (MI returns) will be monitored on a monthly basis.

12. Ongoing Policy Review

The fifth Household Support Fund has been established to respond rapidly to economic vulnerability and financial hardship over the period. It is therefore not possible to accurately forecast spend. The funding available will be subject to ongoing monthly review, to inform any potential changes to support that might be needed for the remainder of the funding period.

The HSF5 is due to run until 30th September 2024 but once all funds have been dispersed, the fund will be closed. In order to maximise the support we can provide to all our residents district/city councils will always seek to redirect residents to other forms of support where they feel this is more appropriate to support their needs.