

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment - Head of service review

Reference: ECIA462757490

Submitted: 07 November 2022 13:21 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: Extension to the Household Support Fund: Funding to Support Families and Vulnerable Adults

Policy / decision type: Key Decision

Overview of policy / decision: On 26 May 2022, the Government announced a third extension to the Household Support Fund (HSF) which will again be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need. Final grant conditions were received from DWP on 30 September 2022, which will run from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 and totals £500m, supporting those most in need. The last Household Support Fund required that funding is ringfenced to specific cohorts of people and category of spend. This is no longer required but that the fund is targeted to those in most need, particularly those who may not be eligible of other support central government has recently made but who are nevertheless in need.

Of this, the Council has again been allocated £9.437m by the Department for Work and Pensions. In terms of type of support, energy bills may be of particular concern to low-income households during the period of the scheme, and Authorities should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy. The fund can also be used to provide support with food, essentials linked to energy and water, wider essentials. It can also be used to support housing 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.

Of the total grant, £750,000 has been allocated through a previous decision (FP-522-10-22).

This decision sets out the proposals to allocate the remaining £8.687m of grant as follows:

Allocate £3.750m for the provision of Wonde food vouchers to those eligible for free school meals, those 2 years olds who are in receipt of free entitlement for early education and those 3 and 4 years olds entitled to either early years pupil premium and / or live in one of the lowest 10%, 20% or 30% geographical wards of disadvantage in Essex that attracts an additional free entitlement funding supplement for the December 2022, February 2023 and Easter 2023 school holidays, five weeks in total.

Allocate £1.000m to support households where those with disabilities use electrical assistive equipment to maintain their health and wellbeing and that requires extensive use of electricity. These households are identified through the council's own records and determined by need and type of equipment used. Those households will be invited to apply for financial support for their electric bills

Allocate £1.800m for the Essential Living Fund, a scheme managed on behalf of the County Council by Southend Borough Council, where access to the fund is through an application process with evidence of need.

Allocate £1.700m for support for unpaid carers, vulnerable adults and targeted family support delivered through locally trusted voluntary and community sector organisations and foodbanks to support children and their families. Funding to be distributed by the Head of Strategic Commissioning for Children and Families

Allocate £90,000 Wonde vouchers to support young carers.

Allocate £346,543 for administrative costs.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: This decision aligns with the Everyone's Essex Strategy, in particular the strategic aim to create a good place for children and families to grow in and the commitment to Family Resilience and Stability, Levelling Up Outcomes for Children and promoting health, care and wellbeing for all parts of the population that need our help because this decision will provide access to support those in most need.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Helen Lincoln (Children, Families and Education)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Louise McKinlay (Deputy Leader and Community, Equality, Partnerships)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: As with any grants programme it would be sensible to ensure that there is some monitoring and criteria to ensure that grants are targeted at need and do not disproportionately benefit particular groups in a way which cannot be justified.

In terms of food vouchers, Wonde having supplied vouchers to schools since December 2020, processes for reporting on the impact of this are well established.

In terms of the prepaid cards delivered by the Essential Living Fund, we can monitor spend and mitigate risk by running daily fraud reports. This will give us a sense of the impact of the grants and mean we can be confident the funding has been issued to those who most need it most.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: No

Wider community or groups of people: Yes

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Levelling up outcomes for families

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: None

Sex

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Age

This decision will have a positive impact on the lives of older people. The decision includes the allocation of Allocate £1.8m for the Essential Living Fund. One of the prime aims for the Essential Living Fund is to help people remain in the community rather than enter an institution or Care Home in which they will receive care. Grants under the Essential Living fund can help ensure that applicants independent life in the community will improve and the risk of costly admission will lessen.

Learning Disabilities

This decision will have a positive impact on the lives of people with learning disabilities. The decision includes allocation of £1.7m for support for unpaid carers, vulnerable adults and targeted family support. Four out of five family members of someone with a learning disability take on unpaid care roles. By improving support to these carers, we will increase stability in the lives people with learning disabilities.

Mental Health

This decision will have a positive impact on those dealing with mental health issues. People living with mental health conditions are also more likely to experience financial difficulty: People with anxiety and depression have a median gross annual income of £8,400 less than that of people without those conditions. Worry about being able to afford what you need to keep well often contributes to mental ill health. This can exacerbate conditions and create a negative feedback loop. Addressing these issues is at the core of this decision. By easing some financial worry, particularly around essential items, we will have a positive impact on Mental Health.

Physical Disability

In addition to the support mentioned above for equipment and furniture to help people continue to live independently, this decision also includes the Allocation of £1m to support households where those with disabilities use electrical assistive equipment to maintain their health and wellbeing and that requires extensive use of electricity.

Sex

At the core of this decision is supporting households, who would otherwise struggle with the cost of energy, to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency). These issues disproportionately affect women: 45% of single parents – the vast majority (90%) of which are women – are living in poverty. Almost half of children living with a single parent (47%) are now in poverty. By providing households in difficulty with essential support, this decision will therefore have a positive impact on the lives of women.

Race

The issues mentioned above also have a disproportionate effect on those from BAME backgrounds. According to the institute of race relations 50% of all Bangladeshis and 46% of all Pakistanis were in the most deprived fifth of the population after meeting housing costs, compared with 20% of all white British people. In 2018/19, the Social Metric Commission found that 46% of black African and Caribbean people and 32% of those with a mixed ethnic heritage were in poverty compared with 19% of white British people. By providing households in financial difficulty with essential support, this decision will therefore have a positive impact on the lives of people from BAME backgrounds.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Working families

Nature of impact: None

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: None

Harlow

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Harwich

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Canvey Island

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

As mentioned above, the interventions set out in this decision will have a positive impact on those with mental health conditions and SEND. It will also have a specific impact on the children in these households. Children raised in environments of low socio-economic status show consistent reductions in cognitive performance across many areas, particularly language function and cognitive control (attention, planning, decision-making). This is due to the stress of financial uncertainty. By providing those households that struggle with support to purchase things that are essential for their wellbeing, we deliver better outcomes for these children long term.

Children on Free School Meal

In addition to the above, this decision includes allocation £3.75m for the provision of Wonde food vouchers to those eligible for free school meals. We will therefore deliver a clear, measurable positive impact for this cohort.

Geography

The issues that this decision seeks to support families with disproportionately affect deprived communities such as those listed above. This support will therefore necessarily have a positive impact on these areas. The allocation of £3.75 million for food vouchers will also be targeted at those 3 and 4 year olds who live in one of the lowest 10%, 20% or 30% geographical wards of disadvantage in Essex. This will ensure the areas listed above are targeted and receive a specific positive impact as a result of this decision.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Looked after children

Nature of impact: None

Veterans

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People on low income

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Working families

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Carers

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Carers are more likely to be in poverty than non-carers. This means they are particularly likely to require some of the support set out in the decision, and therefore be positively impacted by it. The decision also includes the Allocation of £1.7m for support for unpaid carers, vulnerable adults and targeted family support. It also includes the allocation of £90,000 Wonde vouchers to support young carers.

People who are unemployed/economically inactive and people on low income

People who are unemployed or on low incomes are more likely to struggle to afford the things they need to keep themselves well. Addressing these essential needs is at the core of this decision. Through this support, there will be a positive impact of these cohorts.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

People living in urban or over-populated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: As mentioned above, the issues that this decision seeks to support families with disproportionately affect deprived communities such as those listed above. This support will therefore necessarily have a positive impact on these areas. The allocation of £3.75 million for food vouchers will also be targeted at those 3 and 4 year olds who live in one of the lowest 10%, 20% or 30% geographical wards of disadvantage in Essex. These wards tend to be in urban areas or coastal communities. This will ensure the areas listed above are targeted and receive a specific positive impact as a result of this decision. This will ensure the areas listed above are targeted and receive a specific positive impact as a result of this decision.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or

adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: High

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Families who have got new caring responsibilities and family members abilities to fulfill caring roles

As has been mentioned, the decision will allow for targeted support for those with caring roles, easing transitions and support people to stay well while in these roles.

Families after couple separation

As has been mentioned, single parent households are significantly more likely to experience poverty. This will ease pressure on a lot of these households after family separation.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to the built environment / energy?: No

Does your decision / policy involve designing service provision and procurement to minimise freight and staff travel and enable use of active and public transport options?: No

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to waste?: No

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 07/11/2022

Name of person completing the ECIA: Seth Hopkins

Email address of person completing the ECIA: Seth.Hopkins@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Children, Families and Education

Your service area: Children and Families Commissioning

Your team: Children and Families Commissioning

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk