



REPORT TO:	Cllr Anne Dorrian, Leader of Boston Borough Council
DATE:	28 th May 2025
SUBJECT:	HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND (seventh round)
PURPOSE:	To accept the funding allocation from Lincolnshire County Council as part of the Department for Work and Pension's Household Support Fund 1 April – 31 March 2026 to deliver the scheme at a local level.
KEY DECISION:	Yes
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Cllr Emma Cresswell, Portfolio Holder for Communities & Wellbeing
REPORT OF:	Emily Spicer, Assistant Director Communities & Housing Services
REPORT AUTHOR:	Roxanne Warrick, Service Manager, Healthy Living
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL
EXEMPT REPORT?	No

SUMMARY

In October 2024, the government announced a further extension of Household Support Fund (HSF). As with previous rounds of the scheme, the fund has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support vulnerable households most in need with the cost of essentials.

Following the publication of the grant allocations and scheme guidance on 19 March 2025, this report sets out details of the scheme and options to utilise the Lincolnshire allocation of £9,631,345.40 over the 12-month period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

This is the seventh round of funding and as with earlier rounds, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) are required to collaborate with district councils and third sector partners to effectively deliver the scheme. Relationships with partners and administrative processes to support delivery are now well established with learning embedded from previous funding rounds.

The primary objective of the HSF continues to be the provision of support for the cost of household essentials (food & utilities). While this is the priority, local authorities are also now encouraged to consider using the HSF to provide preventative support which can have a longer term, sustainable impact

As with previous rounds, a proportion of the funding has been allocated to schools and early years providers to distribute to targeted cohorts and to support eligible care leavers in supported living accommodation. The remainder will be allocated to District Councils using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), to support the delivery of an application-based element and locally determined schemes that meet the specific needs of communities.

Due to the urgent need to administer the funding to our communities, each council is asked to support the recommendations as provided within this report. Whilst funding will be allocated to each sovereign council and dispersed to households in need within that district, a single policy and scheme has developed across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) to provide administrative efficiency and consistency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To accept the funding allocation from Lincolnshire County Council as part of the Department for Work and Pension's Household Support Fund 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 to deliver the scheme at a local level. This is an indicative total of **£327,465** for Boston.
- To give delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Communities & Housing Services in consultation relevant Portfolio Holders to implement the policy in respect of administration and local distribution of the funding.
- To utilise local allocation to meet local need and support vulnerable households in-line with the Household Support Fund grant conditions:
 - 40% allocated via grant donation to Lincolnshire Community Foundation to administer public facing application-based scheme to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need of help with the cost of essentials
 - 10% allocated to internal teams including South & East Lincolnshire's Home Energy Advice & Retrofit Team (HEART), Wellbeing Lincs, Good Homes Hub and Housing Advice & Homeless to support residents in most need
 - 20% allocated to 'prevention' support including budgeting advice, energy efficiency measures, digital inclusion and community food projects
 - 20% allocated to external partners including local food banks, charities, community support groups and NHS teams to support clients, patients and residents in most need
 - 10% to retained support administration and staff costs incurred by South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership to deliver the local scheme

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Accepting access to this local allocation of Government funding will ensure the Council can support residents in the most need with household essentials.
- Previous HSF rounds have been successfully delivered by this model. Relationships with delivery partners and mechanisms are now well established with learning taken from previous funding rounds.
- Working with third sector organisations with reputable record of delivering grants and crisis support to residents in need ensures a wide range of vulnerable households are identified, engaged and supported.
- Crisis and prevention support will be available to meet the needs Boston residents and the local community.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- Do nothing and decline the grant. The grant is paid in arrears and there is no requirement to draw down the funding. To not utilise the funding would be detrimental to households at a time when many continue to experience financial pressures and is not considered an option.
- To administer the application-based scheme in-house. Due to limited capacity and timescales this is not recommended. S&ELCP have an established relationship with Lincolnshire Community Foundation to deliver local grants. They are a reputable Lincolnshire based grant-maker with the network and experience to efficiently deliver public-facing schemes.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In the Autumn 2024 budget, the Government announced that a further £742 million would be made available to county councils and unitary authorities under the Household Support Fund (HSF) to support vulnerable households with the cost of essentials.
- 1.2 This represents the seventh round of funding since the scheme was launched in October 2021. Lincolnshire has received an allocation of £9,631,345.40 to be utilised between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.
- 1.3 On 19 March 2025, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published guidance to Councils detailing the principles of the scheme and the types of support which may be offered. The overarching objective of the HSF is to help those who are struggling to afford household essentials including energy and water bills, food and wider essentials.
- 1.4 Whilst in two tier areas the funding is allocated to County Councils, guidance specifically outlines expectation for County Councils to work with District Councils to provide support to ensure the funding meets its objectives by identifying those most in need. District Councils and charitable organisations that have the reputation, knowledge and relationships to identify and help the most vulnerable residents.
- 1.5 S&ELCP have been working with Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire District Councils and third sector partners to ensure a collective response to equitably distribute funds.
- 1.6 When administering the HSF, local authorities are required to adopt the following principles:
 - use the funding for the period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 to help vulnerable households in the most need with the cost of essentials and wider essentials
 - consider offering some level of preventative support, which has a longer-term sustainable impact alongside the provision of crisis support
- 1.7 The HSF is intended to support a wide range of low-income households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events. It is not limited to those in receipt of benefits or intended to be focused on one specific vulnerable group.

- 1.8 The scheme may be delivered through a variety of routes including: proactive support, application-based support or by issuing grants to Third Party Organisations to provide support on their behalf. Every Authority must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis throughout the duration of the HSF, either continuously over the majority of the period or at regular intervals throughout the scheme.
- 1.9 Local authorities have flexibility and can use discretion to identify and support those most in need. Individual awards can be whatever type and amount is deemed appropriate, bearing in mind the overall scheme criteria.

2. ALLOCATION OF HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND IN LINCOLNSHIRE

- 2.1 The allocation must be distributed between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. To minimise risk and aid delivery at pace and response to local need, it is proposed that the distribution used in Lincolnshire for the previous HSF funding rounds is replicated. This enables a wide range of vulnerable households to receive support through a variety of different methods and promotes opportunities to support residents build routes out of poverty.
- 2.2 Lincolnshire County Council have confirmed proposed local delivery:
- 64% of the total funding to proactively target children via schools and early years providers, for children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) Early Years Pupil Premium', (EYPP) and families with a 2-year-old eligible for 'Early Years Entitlement' (EYE). This will be transferred to schools and Early Years providers to be distributed in the best way to meet local needs. This ensures eligible children will automatically receive support via this proposal with no application necessary. An estimated that 36,000 children and young people will be supported
 - 1% of the funding to support care leavers in supported living accommodation
 - 1% will be utilised to cover LLC administrative costs
 - 34% will be made available to the seven district councils to distribute under local arrangements. This will include an application-based process, in line with grant conditions, to meet the needs of their local populations. Any associated administration costs will be met from individual district allocations. The anticipated amounts to be made available to each district council will be based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) weighted by population.
- 2.3 The indicative allocation to the South & East Lincolnshire Council Partnership totals **£1,506,340** for the sub-region. This a **provisional** amount, subject to confirmation following the verification of the number of children eligible for the proactive support. Allocations for South & East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership are shown in **Table 1**:

	Provisional allocation of HSF7
Boston	£327,465
East Lindsey	£785,917
South Holland	£392,958
S&ELCP	£1,506,340

3. **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND DELIVERY IN SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP**

- 3.1 District Councils will have discretion deliver local schemes in accordance with the scheme guidance and are required to provide an application-based process to residents to access.
- 3.2 Following discussions with Portfolio Holders, local stakeholders, charities, community support partners and internal teams supporting vulnerable residents, the local allocations in S&ELCP will be distributed:
- 40% allocated via grant donation to Lincolnshire Community Foundation to administer public facing application-based scheme to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need of help with the cost of essentials
 - 10% allocated to internal teams including South & East Lincolnshire's Home Energy Advice & Retrofit Team (HEART), Wellbeing Lincs, Good Homes Hub and Housing Advice & Homeless to support residents in most need
 - 20% allocated to 'prevention' support including budgeting advice, energy efficiency measures, digital inclusion and community food projects
 - 20% allocated to external partners including local food banks, charities, community support groups and NHS teams to support clients, patients and residents in most need
 - 10% to retained support administration and staff costs incurred by South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership to deliver the local scheme
- 3.3 As permitted by the new guidance, the Council intends to deliver a preventative support offer with the aim to alleviate poverty and build local resilience. This will support vulnerable households from falling into crisis and join up local support to provide longer term, sustainable solutions.

4. **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND ADMINISTRATION IN SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP**

- 4.1 Whilst each council will receive its allocation separately, one scheme will be delivered across the Partnership to ensure administration efficiencies and consistency of approach. The basic outline being our approach is based on:
- We are building on our **previous experience** of delivering discretionary grants to vulnerable residents including lessons learnt around managing demand, fastest way to get support out to our communities whilst ensuring good governance
 - Ensuring our scheme has **flexibility** to use local budget and for us to support the most vulnerable households in our communities
 - Supporting our third sector **partners** to help the most vulnerable residents in our communities
 - Engaging **local charities** to administer the scheme, to both reach households that would not normally approach the Council and reduce demands on internal resources
- 4.2 The administration of the scheme will be through the Healthy Communities team within the Communities & Housing Services Directorate.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Household Support Fund will provide valuable help to vulnerable households in most need with the cost of essentials.

6. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

- 6.1 The following benefits are anticipated through delivery of the Household Support Fund:
- That vulnerable households are identified using local knowledge, relationships and understanding of our communities
 - That vulnerable households in most need of help will the costs of essentials will be supported
 - That working with community support partners and charities will enable wider support to be provided to vulnerable households over and above the Household Support funding
 - Single scheme ensures administration efficiencies and consistency of approach

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

- 7.1 A single policy and scheme across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership will provide administrative efficiency and consistency in support for the most vulnerable residents in our communities.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 8.1 The following Corporate Priorities are supported through the administration of the Household Support Fund:

Boston Borough Council – ‘Priority 1 - People Focused’

East Lindsey District Council – ‘Maximise healthy and active lives’

South Holland District Council – ‘Your health and wellbeing’

South & East Lincolnshire Council Partnership – ‘Healthy Lives’

9. STAFFING

- 9.1 This externally grant funding can be used to cover all staffing and associated administrative costs to support efficient and effective distribution of funds.

10. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Due to the urgency to accept the local allocation and start local delivery of the Household Support Fund this decision is made as a Leader’s decision outside of committee process.

11. DATA PROTECTION

- 11.1 All personal data will be administered following data protection legislation.
- 11.2 Reporting from third sector partners and grant recipients will be for statistical purposes only and will include no personal data.

12. FINANCIAL

- 12.1 There is no impact on the Councils budget; the scheme is fully externally funded by DWP via LCC. All staffing and administrative costs to deliver this scheme must be taken from local allocation.
- 12.2 As in previous rounds, the funding is ringfenced and paid in arrears. As the recipient of the funding, LCC is required to provide data to the DWP to enable payment, this is submitted as one interim and a final return
- 12.3 To support this, each District will need to maintain records of all payments made under the scheme and supply information in an agreed format to enable data to be consolidated to provide one return for Lincolnshire. The template and district submission dates will be provided to the HSF lead for each area.
- 12.4 Following verification by the DWP, LCC will be paid in arrears and will then reimburse each District area for actual expenditure incurred in line with the guidance and grant
- 12.5 LCC will reimburse each DC with the actual expenditure incurred in accordance with the scheme. The payments will be made in arrears following the submission of the returns.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 13.1 By accepting the grant allocations the delivery of the local scheme can commence. This will ensure the funding can be made available to vulnerable households most in need with the cost of essentials without delay whilst mitigating against the risk of not drawing down funding made available to Lincolnshire.
- 13.2 The guidance identifies the potential risk of fraud as recipients may appear to be eligible when they are not. Distributing the funding through trusted partners minimises this risk.

14. STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

- 14.1 Portfolio holders with responsibility for Health & Wellbeing, Communities and Partnerships have been briefed on the delivery of the Lincolnshire scheme.
- 14.2 Key stakeholders including local charities, food banks and internal services supporting vulnerable residents have been consulted as part of the development of this scheme.

15. REPUTATION

- 15.1 By delivering the Household Support Fund to eligible households facing significant increases living costs, the Councils maintain their reputation of community leadership, for supporting vulnerable residents and delivering trusted welfare support.

16. CONTRACTS

- 16.1 All appropriate procurement exemption notices and grant agreements have been applied in line with the sovereign Council's individual constitutions.

17. CRIME AND DISORDER

- 17.1 It is in the report authors opinion that there are no crime and disorder implications associated with accepting this grant funding.

18. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

- 18.1 The scheme is being developed with regard to the legislative duties of Equality Act 2010. Grants will be available to all residents regardless of their age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.
- 18.2 The distribution of the HSF directly supports a range of individuals experiencing financial crisis and is a key component to preventing further hardship. It is anticipated that the scheme will have a positive impact on a range of protected characteristic groups.
- 18.3 Supporting residents vulnerable to financial hardship is a preventative approach to safeguarding.

19. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

- 19.1 The Household Support Fund (sixth phase) will be available to help residents with poor physical or mental health. Support with household essentials will alleviate poor health related financial stress and fuel poverty.

20. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 20.1 It is in the report authors opinion that there are no climate change and environmental implications associated with accepting this grant funding.

21. ACRONYMS

HSF – Household Support Fund


DWP – The Department for Work and Pensions

LCC – Lincolnshire County Council

PSPS – Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd

SELCP – South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT	
<i>A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.</i>	
APPENDICES	
<i>NONE</i>	
BACKGROUND PAPERS	
Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -	
Document title	Where the document can be viewed
<i>Household Support Fund Guidance</i>	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils
<i>Lincolnshire County Council Leaders Decision (15 April 2025)</i>	https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s66787/Household%20Support%20Fund%20Round%207%20Grant%20Utilisation.pdf

<p><i>Lincolnshire County Council letter outlining countywide delivery of Household Support Fund 7 (23 April 2025)</i></p>	 <p>HSF7 Chief Executives - 23.04.25</p>
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REPORT APPROVAL	
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Signed off by:	<p>Cllr Anne Dorrian, Leader of Boston Borough Council</p> <p>Cllr Emma Cresswell, Portfolio Holder for Communities (People)</p> <p>Emily Spicer, Assistant Director, Communities & Housing Services</p> <p>Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance & Joint Section 151 Officer</p> <p>John Medlar, Assistant Director, Governance & Monitoring Officer</p>