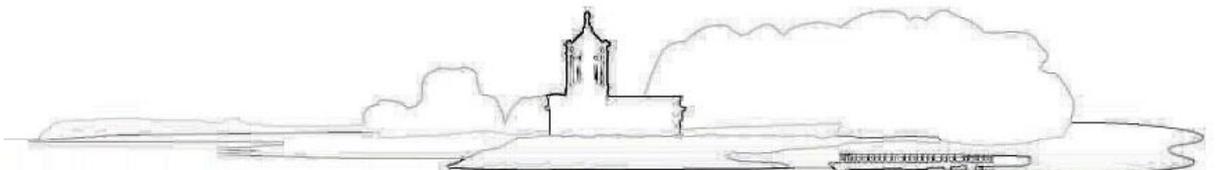


# Rutland County Council

## Household Support Fund Policy October 22 to March 23

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## **Summary of document**

The policy applies to the extension of the Household Support Fund as announced by central government on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The policy sets out to achieve a fair and robust approach to the award and allocation of the Household Support Fund.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In response to the ongoing economic recovery following the pandemic, the Government announced there would be support to help the hardest hit families and individuals. The expectation is that funding should primarily be used to support households most in need with food, energy, and water bills.
- 1.2 Originally, the Government announced on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 that it would provide a Household Support Fund Grant to cover the period 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Rutland County Council was allocated £157,371.07 funding for the scheme.
- 1.3 The scheme was extended again from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 30 September 2022 to support those most in need with significantly rising living costs.
- 1.4 The Government announced that the scheme will be extended again to 31 March 2023. Guidance was issued on 30 September 2022. Rutland County Council has been allocated £157,371.07 funding for the scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- 1.5 This policy sets out the Councils approach of reflecting the key principles of the Household Support Fund and our eligibility criteria.

## 2.0 LEGISLATION

- 2.1 Local authorities will be responsible for delivering grants to eligible households. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide funding under section 31 of The Local Government Act 2003.
- 2.2 The DWP have issued guidance called 'Household Support Fund: - guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England'. The guidance can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils>
- 2.3 Local authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the guidance. This policy sets out how this will work for Rutland County Council.
- 2.4 The Household Support Fund will be delivered over a number of months in order to capture and support as many eligible households as possible prior to the fund closing on 31 March 2023.

### 3.0 POLICY AIM

- 3.1 The policy aims to support vulnerable households in most need of support with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting) water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials.
- 3.2 The DWP have encouraged Council's to adopt the following principles which has formed the basis of our approach:
- Use of discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information;
  - Use the funding to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy, food and water bills, and other related essentials and wider essentials.
  - In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, use the fund to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need;
  - Work together with other with District Councils including, where necessary and appropriate, other local services, such as social and care workers to help identify and support households within the scope of the scheme.
- 3.3 This policy applies from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 as funding received for April to September has now been expended.
- 3.4 Funding from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 can be distributed as the authority sees fit, providing individuals can self-refer. There will be an online application process to facilitate this.
- 3.5 Should the Council have no funds remaining after making initial payments, then all other applications will be rejected.
- 3.6 The Council reserves the right to change or adapt the policy according to the available funds and changes made to the Governments guidance.

### 4.0 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

#### Food vouchers for households with school aged children

- 4.1 Families and individuals of school age children who attend a school or college in Rutland, will be provided with a food voucher, if they are currently eligible for free school meals. The vouchers will be issued via the child's school and will cover the following terms breaks:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Amount per break per child</b>
October half-term 2022	£35.00
Christmas 2022	£40.00
February 2023 half-term	£15.00

- 4.2 The voucher will be for a set amount per child, per break and will be paid as a voucher before the start of each break.
- 4.3 Easter 2023 is not included in the scheme as the funding is up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and the Easter break falls after this date.
- 4.4 There may be reciprocal arrangements in place whereby children who live in Rutland and attend schools out of our county receive vouchers from their school if they are in receipt of free school meals in accordance with the Household Support Fund Policy for the relevant Local Authority.

#### **One-off Payment for eligible households**

- 4.5 The Council will provide a household support payment by bank transfer to households who have been identified as meeting the following criteria:
- Be a household living in Rutland 1/12/2022;
  - The applicant or their partner is in receipt of Local Council Tax Support on 1/12/2022.
  - The household has savings of less than £5,000; and
  - At least one of the following categories:
    - Be of working age or pension age with children under school admission age (aged 0-4); or
    - Be of working age (under 65) without children; or
    - At least one person in the household is of pensionable age
- 4.6 A one-off payment £80 will be made in December 2022. We expect half is to be spent on food and half is to be spent on energy and water bills, unless the applicant advises us that it has been spent on one of the other eligible categories (see section 5).
- 4.7 Eligible Households will receive a Post Office Payout voucher to redeem at their local Post Office.

#### **One-off payment to Care Leavers**

- 4.8 The Council will provide a one-off payment of £100 to care leavers (as defined in the Children's Act 1989 as amended) in December 2022. The payment will be organised in conjunction with their allocated Personal Adviser.

## **5.0 FUNDING USE**

- 5.1 As defined in the guidance eligible spend includes:
- **Energy and water-** the fund should primarily be used to support with energy bills for heating cooking, lighting and water bills for drinking, washing, cooking, sanitation and sewerage
  - **Food-** the fund should primarily be used to provide support with food through vouchers or cash.

- **Essentials linked to energy and water-** the fund can be used to provide essentials including, sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of fridges, freezers, ovens etc.
- **Wider essentials-** the fund can be used to support with wider essentials e.g., other household bills, clothing, repairs.
- **Housing costs-** the fund can be used only in exceptional circumstances where existing schemes do not meet this exceptional need as deemed necessary by the Council. This also applies to historic rent arrears.
- The fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, in such cases the homeowner should contact their lender

5.2 We are able to retain 10% of the funding for administration costs.

5.3 The following table details the funding distribution by cohort from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. (this may be subject to change based on demand and any underspend in vouchers and other awards).

<b>Distribution group</b>	<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of grant</b>
1. Households with children	Vouchers for food for school age children during school breaks	£54,250	33%
2. Households with children	Households with at least 1 child under school admission age	£4,880	3%
3. Households with pensioners	Pension age households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support	£46,560	30%
4. Other Households	Households without children in receipt of Local Council Tax Support	£31,360	20%
5. Other Households	Application process	£2,000	1%
6. Other Households	Care Leavers	£4,800	3%
n/a	Administration cost	£15,737	10%
	<b>Total*</b>	<b>£159,587</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Distribution reflects an overspend of £2,216, however some vouchers may not be redeemed based on previous schemes. Should an overspend occur the Council will meet any additional cost.

## 6.0 AWARD DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

- 6.1 Food vouchers will be issued to schools for distribution to households who are eligible for free school meals prior to the end of each term. Unused vouchers may be redistributed at a later date.
- 6.2 Households who are identified as eligible for a household support payment will receive a letter from the Post Office.
- 6.3 Individuals who consider that they are eligible and have not received a letter from the Post office by 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022, should email [localtaxation@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:localtaxation@rutland.gov.uk) in the first instance or call Customer Services on 01572 722577.
- 6.4 Those individuals who do not meet the eligibility criteria detailed at Point 4, but who need support can apply through our application process detailed in 7 below.

## 7.0 APPLICATION PROCESS

- 7.1 Household who are eligible for a payment detailed at Point 4 do not need to apply. The Council will use data it already holds to identify and contact eligible households.
- 7.2 Households who are not eligible but have extenuating circumstances, are experiencing financial hardship or pay high energy bills, can complete an online application form.

The following are examples of circumstances that would be considered for an award:

- A member of the household had a long term health condition. E.g. someone needs home oxygen therapy which is dependent on using a constant supply of fuel to operate
  - The household is large and has higher energy bills e.g. 5+ people
  - The property is not energy efficient e.g. lack of double glazing, not on dual fuel or not on mains supply, has an EPC band F or G rating
  - Households that are on a low income but just above the threshold to claim state benefits such as Universal Credit
- 7.3 The Council will determine if the household is in low income if they live on less than 60% of the median income standard in the UK. A low income household has a combined gross annual income of less than £26,000 per year. 4 The Council will also accept referrals from Council Officer (e.g. social Workers) and trusted partners. E.g. Rutland Citizens Advice Bureau.

## **8.0 CANCELLATION AND REPAYMENT**

- 8.1 The vouchers and payments are made in good faith and on the understanding that households will report changes in their circumstance that affect their entitlement to Local Council Tax Support. We will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying their records or failing to report a change to gain Household Support Fund money will face prosecution and any vouchers or awards issued will be subject to claw back, as may be any awards paid in error.
- 8.2 Post payment assurance checks may be undertaken. The Governments Counter Fraud Function may support local authorities to carry out post-event assurance work to identify high risk payments.

## **9.0 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

- 9.1 No formal appeal rights exist. However, in the interests of natural justice it is regarded as good practice for local authorities to establish a mechanism to allow appeals to be heard.
- 9.2 If an aggrieved applicant wishes to make an appeal against a decision made under this policy, then they will need to write to the Revenues and Benefits Manager within 14 days of notification of the refusal by email to [enquiries@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@rutland.gov.uk)
- 9.3 Appeals will be forwarded to Sav Della Rocca, Director for Resources who will consider the appeal. The applicant will be notified of the decision electronically and this decision will be final.

**A large print version of this document is  
available on request**



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