

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Household Support Fund, 2023-2024
Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the Household Support Fund?

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has provided £842m to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. There have been three previous tranches of funding.

The current funding covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 inclusive. Local Authorities (LAs) have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope of the grant determination and guidance, set out by DWP.

How much funding does the council available have to allocate?

This is the fourth tranche of the Household Support Fund. RBWM's allocation of funding for this period is £1,175,810 for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

Are you allocating all of this funding through partner organisations?

RBWM are allocating the Fund through two schemes, which will run in parallel.

Scheme 1: Free School Meal support during the holidays

RBWM will work with schools to provide families in receipt of Free School Meals with vouchers to assist with food costs during the school holidays. This replicates the successful allocation of funding in this way in the previous three tranches of the Fund.

Scheme 2: Financial support to households identified as being in financial hardship and at risk of escalation of problems

RBWM will work with a selection of third-party organisations to allocate the remainder of the Household Support Fund. These Distribution Partners include a range of local voluntary and community sector organisations, housing associations, and health partners.

Distribution Partners have discretion to identify residents in severe financial hardship and at risk over the period, using their own sources of data and information, as agreed with the council, and in accordance with the DWP guidance.

Partners will take primary responsibility for identifying and assessing who is in greatest need. The council will check for residency, duplicate applications, and potential fraud. Residents may approach Distribution Partners to put themselves forward for support. However, residents are not able to directly apply for support from the council.

Which partner organisations will be working with the council?

RBWM will partner with the following Distribution Partners:

- Citizens Advice East Berkshire (CAEB)
- Abri
- Housing Solutions
- RBWM Housing Service
- Age Concern Windsor
- West Windsor Hub (WWH)
- Baby Bank
- Maidenhead Foodshare
- Windsor Foodshare
- NHS Frimley social prescribing service
- Maidenhead United FC Community Trust
- Optalis
- Achieving for Children

Further partners may be added to this list during the course of the 2023-24 period.

RBWM will work with a wider group of stakeholders in the community, to promote the Household Support Fund and to refer residents to Delivery Partners.

Why have you chosen those partners and not others?

The selected DPs have a strong track record of working to support residents who are most in need and have the information and relationships that can help to target the Fund effectively. Those working directly with our communities are best placed to identify these individuals and to assess who will benefit most from the support. Our partners are also able to link the payment offered by the Household Support Fund to wider advice and support.

Further partners will be considered during the operation of the Fund as appropriate.

Why can't I apply directly?

As explained above, DPs have a strong track record of working to support residents who are most in need and have the information and relationships that can help to target the Fund effectively. Those working directly with our communities are best placed to identify these individuals and to assess who will benefit most from the support. DWP have urged local authorities to use discretion and a wide range of information to target the Fund. The council and its partners believe that working in partnership offers the best route to target support effectively.

Am I eligible for scheme 2?

To be eligible for support, residents must be in severe financial need and at risk of escalation of problems. They must be over 18, resident in the borough, and in receipt of a unique reference number (URN) from a partner organisation. Residents can only receive financial support once during the period. (Although those receiving support through the Free School meals holiday support component of the scheme are not excluded from receiving the £145 cash payment, if they are identified by partners).

What can I request funding for?

Financial support for Scheme 2 will be in the form of a cash payment into individual bank accounts. Partners will work with residents to identify how they will use this payment. It can be used for energy and food costs, as well as wider essentials.

What is the process to claim funding for Free school meal support during the holidays?

Schools apply for food vouchers on behalf of families in receipt of Free School Meals. These vouchers will be allocated to families – there is no application process. Schools request vouchers through a secure platform on behalf of pupils eligible for free school meals who attend their school.

Eligibility Criteria requires pupils to be registered for free school meals and attending a RBWM school regardless of their home address. The funding level is £20 per pupil per funded week. The delivery method being used is through issuing of electronic vouchers.

How can I put myself forward to receive support from scheme 2?

Distribution Partners will work with their own client groups to identify residents for support, and will also reach out to wider residents in need, using their own networks and information, as appropriate. A wider group of community organisations are helping to reach out to residents who may not otherwise be aware of the scheme.

The scheme will also be publicised through targeted communications, and residents can put themselves forward for support to one of the partner organisations. Citizens Advice is acting as our overarching partner and so should be approached if residents are unsure where to go. Please note that residents will be identified on a case-by-case basis, and the scheme is for those in severe financial need. Partners may ask for evidence of benefits status and income and / or draw on wider information that they hold in order to make decisions.

Residents identified by one of our Delivery partners will be given a Unique Reference Number and a link to an online application form to complete. Residents need to complete the online application form to apply for support and will need to enter their

URN in order for their application to be processed. They will also be asked to provide their bank details, and other information needed to process their application. Delivery partners can provide support to residents to complete the online form, where they may struggle to complete it independently. Applications cannot be made directly to the council.

How much can I receive?

For Scheme 1, the funding level is £20 per pupil per funded week.

For Scheme 2, eligible residents will receive a one-off cash payment of £145.

What if I need more than £145?

There will be no additional funding to the £145 through Scheme 2 of the Household Support Fund. However, our Here to Help website – www.RBWM.gov.uk/here-to-help - highlights additional support and advice around energy and water bills, rent, council tax, food, childcare, school meals, benefits and more.

How long will it take before I receive my money?

Applications will be reviewed as they are received. We will aim to advise successful applicants of the outcome of their award within 5 working days of the submission of their application, with payment being made within a further 7 working days.

Payments will only be made via BACS.

Do I have to apply online? I don't have access to the internet.

Applications are through an online portal. However, a member of a DP will assist you when completing the application form and can supply an email address on your behalf if you do not have internet access at home.

Can I apply more than once?

No. For Scheme 2 only one payment can be made per household, and applicants are only allowed to apply for the payment once during the period UP UNTIL 30 June 2023. It is expected that the scheme will then reopen.

Parents of children in receipt of free school (a recipient of Scheme 1) are still eligible to apply for the £145 payment from Scheme 2. However, multiple applications to Scheme 2 are not permitted.

How long does the scheme run for?

The closing date for applications will be 30 June 2023. However, it is expected that it will reopen from 1 July – 31 March 2024, for new applications. The closing date will

be subject to review and could be affected by factors such as the exhaustion of funds.

Due to the limited funds available, and the likelihood of applications outweighing the available funds, the applications will be administered on a first come first served approach. This means that, once funding has been exhausted, no further applications will be considered even where applicants may fit the overall criteria.

Where can I find more information?

Full details are on the RBWM Here to Help website - www.RBWM.gov.uk/here-to-help

Further enquiries, which are not answered through the web pages or these Frequently Asked Questions may be addressed to equality@rbwm.gov.uk

Questions concerning the progress of an individual application, will be answered through the application portal.