



Household Support Fund Scheme 2021/22

Version number 1
December 2021

Tracking

Scheme Title	Household Support Fund Scheme		
Committee	Strategy and resources	Date approved	
Review due date	N/A	Review completed	N/A
Service	Digital & Service Transformation		

Revision History

Revision Date	Revisor	Previous Version	Description of Revision

Document Approvals

Each revision requires the following approvals:

Sponsor Approval		Name	Date
Head of Digital & Service Transformation			

Contents

Introduction	4
Legislation	4
Aims of this Scheme	4
Funding allocation.....	5
Eligibility criteria for Epsom & Ewell’s Household Support Fund Scheme	6
Application process.....	6
How the award will be made	7
Notification of decision	8
Cancellation and repayment	8
Complaints and reviews.....	8

Introduction

1. In response to the ongoing economic recovery following the pandemic, the Government announced there would be financial support to help the hardest hit families and individuals this winter. The expectation is that funding should primarily be used to support households most in need with food, energy and water bills.
2. The Government announced on 30th September 2021 that it would provide a Household Support Fund Grant to cover the period 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022. Surrey County Council has been allocated £5.29m funding for the scheme.
3. Surrey County Council have decided to allocate the funds in the following way.
 - £2m of the fund would be used to enable the continued provision of food vouchers to eligible children over the October half term, Christmas holidays and up to Easter 2022.
 - A further £2.8m has been allocated to borough and district councils who can work alongside representatives from the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCF) to help the most vulnerable households in their area.
 - Money has also been set aside to top up food banks, community fridges and food clubs.
 - Surrey County Council's Surrey Crisis Fund will be further equipped to meet demand until the end of the financial year.
4. Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have been allocated £166,000 to support the most vulnerable within the borough.
5. This Scheme sets out Epsom & Ewell's approach of reflecting the key principles of the Household Support Fund and our eligibility criteria.

Legislation

6. Local authorities will be responsible for delivering grants to eligible families and individuals. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide funding under section 31 of The Local Government Act 2003.
7. The DWP have issued guidance called 'Household Support Fund: guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England'.
8. Local authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the guidance. This scheme sets out how this will work for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.
9. The Household Support Fund will be delivered over a number of months in order to capture and support as many eligible families and individuals as possible prior to the fund closing on 31st March 2022.

Aims of this Scheme

10. The scheme aims to support vulnerable households in most need of support this winter as the economy recovers across Epsom & Ewell with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting) water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials.

11. 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, considering a wide range of information;
 - Use the funding from 6th October 2021 to 31 March 2022 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials and wider essentials;
 - In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need;
 - Work together, where necessary and appropriate, with other local services, such as social and care workers to help identify and support households within the scope of the scheme.
12. This scheme applies from 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022.
13. In light of the level of funding available, potential applicants should note that the Council will first allocate funds to the those who meet the eligibility criteria as set out in this scheme, on a first come, first serve basis.
14. Should the Council have no funds remaining after making initial payments, then all other applications will be rejected.
15. The Council reserves the right to change or adapt the scheme according to the available funds and changes made to the Governments guidance.

Funding allocation

16. The Epsom & Ewell scheme has two parts.
17. The Standard award is expected to predominantly be used to cover increased food and energy bills.
18. The Discretionary award is expected to be used to cover 'wider essentials' such as replacement white goods, clothing and unexpected expenses. In exceptional circumstances it may also be considered for housing costs where the household does not qualify for existing schemes.
19. In designing this scheme and giving regard to the DWP guidance we have determined that the most financially vulnerable people in the borough will be those who have already been assessed as qualifying for our Council Tax Income Discount (for working age households) and Council Tax Support (in the case of pension age households). This mirrors the government determination of vulnerability in regard to the £150 COVID hardship payments which were launched in March 2020. For these reasons, being in receipt of one of these benefits is a pre-requisite to qualifying for a 'standard award' from the Household Support Fund.
20. Furthermore it is acknowledged there is also additional funding available for pension age households, such as up to 100% Council Tax Support and non-means tested Winter Fuel payments. For this reason awards made to pension age households will be less than those awarded to working age households.

21. Below is a table which shows how the funding has been allocated for this scheme.

Total Budget	£166,000
Standard Award	£156,240
Discretionary Award	£9760.00

Eligibility criteria for Epsom & Ewell's Household Support Fund Scheme

22. Standard award eligibility.

- Be a household living in Epsom & Ewell on 06/10/2021;
- The applicant or their partner is in receipt of Council Tax Income Discount or Council Tax Support on the 06/10/2021; and
- The household has savings of less than £6,000

23. Discretionary award eligibility

- Be a household living in Epsom & Ewell on 06/10/2021; and
- The applicant or their partner is liable to pay the Council Tax for the property they are living in on 06/10/2021; and
- The applicant or their partner is liable to pay the utility bills e.g., electricity, gas, water for the property they are living in on 06/10/2021; and
- The household has saving of less than £6,000 on 06/10/2021; and
- There has not already been a Household Support Fund Discretionary award made for this household
- The applicant or their partner is in receipt of any of the following benefits on 06/10/2021:
 - a) Universal Credit with housing costs; or
 - b) Universal Credit without housing costs and your household income is less than £7,400 a year (not including any benefits you get); or
 - c) Housing Benefit
 - d) Employment Support Allowance; or
 - e) Job Seekers Allowance; or
 - f) Income Support; or
 - g) Child Tax Credit and your annual household income is less than £16,190; or
 - h) The guaranteed part of Pension Credit

24. A household can make applications for both schemes but any payment will be capped at £350 per household for both schemes.

Application process

25. To apply for either part of the scheme an online application form will need to be completed. The forms will be available on our website.

26. The latest date that applications for both schemes will be accepted, is the 14 March 2022.

How the award will be made

27. Standard award

28. All payments will be made by BACS to the applicants' bank account.

29. If you qualify for a Standard award you will receive your award in two payments where the award is above £20. The first payments will be issued from 20 December 2021 for applications received before 10 December 2021. The second payments will be issued from 21 February 2022.

30. If we receive your application after 10 December 2021, your first payment will be made as soon as possible after it has been decided you qualify for an award.

31. Below is a table showing what amount you will receive based on your household circumstances.

Working Age Households	Total award	First Payment	Second Payment
Household with no children	£70.00	£50.00	£20.00
Household with one child	£100.00	£75.00	£25.00
Household with two or more children	£120.00	£90.00	£30.00

Pension Age Households	Total award	First Payment	Second Payment
Household with no children	£20.00	£20.00	N/A
Household with one child	£50.00	£35.00	£15.00
Household with two or more children	£70.00	£50.00	£20.00

32. For the purposes of this scheme, only resident children for whom the applicant or their partner receive Child Benefit will be included in the determination of the award.

33. Any household which has a pension aged resident, will be treated as a Pension Age Household.

34. All awards under this scheme are made on the assumption that 50% will be used for Food and 50% used on energy and water bills in working age households. In Pension age households the assumption is that 70% will be used for food and 30% on energy and water bills.

35. Officers reserve the right to conduct eligibility checks before approving payments. This includes checking Benefit claims and DWP records.

36. The applicant may be asked to provide clarification or supporting evidence.

37. Once the allocated funds have been paid then this part of the fund will be closed and no further applications will be considered.

38. Applications will be rejected if the eligibility criteria are not met, or the applicant has not provided us with the evidence we have asked for within 14 days of it being requested.

39. Discretionary Award

40. All payments will be made by BACS to the applicant's bank account.
41. If you qualify for a Discretionary award payments will be issued from 20 December 2021 for applications received before 10 December 2021.
42. If we receive your application after 10 December 2021, your payment will be made as soon as possible after it has been decided you qualify for an award.
43. All applications will be considered within the terms of the guidance provided by the DWP (see paragraph 18 above)
44. Officers reserve the right to conduct eligibility checks before approving payments. This includes checking benefit claims and DWP records.
45. The applicant may be asked to provide clarification or supporting evidence.
46. Once the allocated funds have been paid then this part of the fund will be closed and no further applications will be considered.
47. Applications will be rejected if the eligibility criteria are not met, or the applicant has not provided us with the evidence we have asked for within 14 days of it being requested.

Notification of decision

48. The applicant will be notified of their Household Support Award electronically i.e. via email.
49. If an application is refused, the reason for the decision will be provided.

Cancellation and repayment

50. The Government will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to clawback, as may any funding paid in error.
51. Post payment assurance checks may be undertaken. The Government's Counter Fraud Function may support local authorities to carry out post-event assurance work to identify high risk payments.
52. In making an application, applicants understand that their details may be shared with central government departments for monitoring, statistics and evaluation purposes

Complaints and reviews

53. No formal appeal rights exist. However, the Council recognises that applicants should be entitled to have a discretionary decision reviewed if dissatisfied with the outcome.

54. Only the applicant or authorised agent may request a review against the decision not to award relief or the level of relief awarded.
55. Requests to have a decision reviewed must be made within two weeks of the notification of decision.
56. Any requests for a review of a decision must be in writing via email to HSFund@epsom-ewell.gov.uk specifying reasons why a decision should be amended and supported by relevant new or additional evidence.
57. Reviews will be deemed complete, and the original decision upheld, if further evidence requested from the applicant has not been received within 14 days of the request
58. Requested reviews against decisions, will be considered by Revenues & Benefits Manager
59. A full written explanation of the outcome of the review will be provided within 14 working days of the receipt of the written request.