**Southampton Household Support Fund (HSF) (October 2022 – 31 March 2023):**

**Policy: Agency Referrals**

1. **Introduction:** £421 million has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with significantly rising living costs. This funding covers the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive.
2. **Purpose:** The purpose of the Household Support Fund(HSF) is to provide support to vulnerable households. This covers a wide range of low-income households in need - including families with children of all ages, pensioners, and other low-income households, for example; larger families, single income households, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities. It is intended, particularly, for those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available, and groups who are vulnerable to rising prices- even though they are supported through these schemes.
3. **Government Funding:** The UK Government has allocated £2.2 Million for Southampton City Council for HSF for October 2022 – 31 March 2023. The budget will used to provide practical support to residents and will also be used to cover the cost of administering the scheme. All support will be subject to availability of funding.
4. **Southampton Household Support Fund:** The Southampton Household Support Fund(October 2022 – 31 March 2023), will have 3 main elements of support:

* Help for low-income families with children via the direct provision of supermarket vouchers to schools for children eligible for Free School Meals during the October half-term, Christmas and February school holidays.
* Help for other low-income householdsvia online self-referral applications to Southampton Household Support Fund for supermarket vouchers.
* Agency referral for supermarket vouchers, prepayment gas and electric top-ups and for white goods.

1. **Policy:** This document (the Policy) sets out the local eligibility framework and approach in administering the agency referral element of the scheme. The Policy is subject to change and should any amendments or additions be made; the updated Policy will be republished. Any applications received the day following any published amendments will be reviewed in accordance with that updated Policy.
2. **Assessment of Eligibility:** HSF Support is only available to people living in the Southampton City Council area. To be eligible for the Household Support Fund, the household/individual being referred must meet the following criteria:
   * Be a Southampton City Resident (if they don't live in Southampton, they must apply to their own local authority)
   * Be aged 16 years or more
   * Be recently, adversely financially impacted and in hardship.

Referrals for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) can be made regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution for example if:

* + There are community care needs
  + They have serious health problems
  + There is a risk to a child’s wellbeing.

1. **Personal Data:** The online application process will require personal information to be provided to verify identity, eligibility and enable allocation of support. It also requests for additional information about your household which we need for general monitoring purposes -however is an option not to provide this- and it will not affect the outcome of your application. This data/information may be shared with other organisations or council departments, but only if a need is identified to do so. It may also be shared to prevent, investigate or prosecute criminal offences, or as the law otherwise requires. All personal data will be managed in line with [General Data Protection Regulation](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/council-data/data-protection/gdpr-faqs/) requirements.
2. **Agency Referrals:** SouthamptonHSF is for Southampton residents ‘most in need to help with significantly rising living costs’

* A range of agencies will be able to make referrals to HSF.
* Referral agencies will be pre-agreed via the Southampton Household Support Fund Project Group.
* Organisations and SCC departments may request to become a referral agency by contacting Household.Support.Fund@southampton.gov.uk
* Referrals will only be accepted by recognised HSF referrals agencies and only for households who reside in Southampton and who are in crisis.
* Referrals will not be accepted from personal email addresses.
* Agencies making referrals to HSF will be expected to use their discretion and be providing additional advice and support to assist the household in crisis.
* If a household has already been referred by another referral agency during this period, the agency application will be declined.
* Duplicate or repeat applications will also be declined.
* The scheme will operate subject to availability of funding.

1. **Support Available**: Agencies will be able to make referrals on behalf of households for:

* Food (supermarket voucher)
* Pre-payment Utility Top-up
* White Goods

Funding will be split into 2 parts - October to December 2022 and January to March 2023. The scheme will be suspended once the allocated funding has been used.

1. **Food (Supermarket Voucher**):

* Residents can apply direct via the online self-referral form (subject to funding available). Only one self- referral application will be accepted for the period October – December 2022. A further self-referral application may be made for the period of January – March 2023.
* However, an additional application can be made in each period, for an individual/household, by a recognised referral agency. The level of support provided, will mirror the self-referral offer, and will be for £50 for the main applicant and £10 per additional person in the household.
* Agency referrals must be made via the Agency Referral Form (not the self-referral form on the SCC website). Access to the form will be emailed to agencies. HSF Agency referrals can also be made to SCRATCH for utilities and white goods (this will need to be on a separate application form – see below).

1. **Utility Top-Ups (pre-payment):** Agencies will need to complete a ‘Utility Top-up Request Form’. Support will only be for prepayment meter customers. Only 1 application per household will be accepted during the period of 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 - subject to available funding. A further application may be made between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 - subject to available funding.
2. Where the household has prepayment gas and electric, the total amount can be split as required. The referral agency is required to give information about the utility supplier. Referrals cannot be processed without this information. The maximum amount will be:

* Single person £40
* Couple £70
* Family/Larger household £98



1. **White Goods:** Agencies will need to complete a ‘White Goods Request Form’ and demonstrate evidence of need and that no other routes of support are available (including charitable grants to individuals). The offer is:

* Single person: Table-top cooker or fridge (1 item only).
* Couple/Family/Larger household: Cooker, fridge or washing machine (1 item only).

Referrals will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Only 1 application per household will be accepted during the period of 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023 - subject to available funding.



1. **Processing Referrals:** Referrals for White Goods will be processed in date order of submission. Requests for Utility Top-ups will be assessed in date and time order and processed within 2 working days and sent via email. If there is a requirement for vouchers to printed and posted via Royal Mail, this may take an additional 4 working days.
2. **Repeat Referrals:** Repeat or duplicate referrals will not be accepted.
3. **Prepayment Vouchers & Expiry Dates**: Lost, stolen or misplaced vouchers will not be replaced. All vouchers must be used within their expiry dates. No replacement will be made for vouchers which have expired. No alternative will be offered.
4. **Difficulties Receiving/Accessing Vouchers:**

For queries regarding supermarket vouchers, contact [Household.Support.Fund@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:Household.Support.Fund@southampton.gov.uk) 02394016642.

For queries regarding utility pre-payment vouchers, contact [Welfare@scratchcharity.co.uk](mailto:Welfare@scratchcharity.co.uk)

1. **Disputes:** All support is discretionary, and there is no right to request an appeal of any decision in relation to referral.
2. **Queries and Complaints:** For more information about Southampton Household Support Fund [Household Support Fund (southampton.gov.uk)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/benefits-welfare/money-advice/household-support-fund/)

For more information about comments and complaints visit**:** [How to make a complaint (southampton.gov.uk)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/comments-complaints/complaints/)

1. **Timeframe:** The Southampton HSF is time-limited. This document relates to the funding period from 1 October to 31 March 2023.