

OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



Reading
Borough Council
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This notice is to be used for the following types of officer decisions. (Select one option).

A. Decisions taken by officers under a specific express delegation from Council or a Committee.

B. Decisions taken by officers under a general delegation from Council or a Committee, which relates to (i) a permission or a licence, or (ii) the rights of an individual, or (iii) a contract or expenditure over £100,000.

1. Title of decision:	Household Support Fund 7 Children's Clothing Support
2. Date of the decision:	10 September 2025
3. The decision maker:	Assistant Director for Policy, Change and Customer Services

4. Decision details:

It is the decision of the Assistant Director of Policy, Change & Customer Services, in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Leader of the Council, that £35,000 of the £1,992,735.18 Household Support Fund 7 (HSF7) allocation to Reading from the Department for Work & Pensions be utilised in a manner consistent with the allocation decision taken by Policy Committee on 8th July 2024 for the Household Support Fund 5 allocation.

That the Assistant Director for Policy and Performance, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources and the Director of Finance, is delegated to make arrangements for any further funding rounds of the Household Support Fund.

This decision is taken under the delegation approved for the HSF5 grant at the Policy Committee as the HSF7 grant is defined by DWP as an extension of the HSF5.

Specifically, this includes the following Cost of Living support for children and babies within Reading:

Item Category	Allocation	Estimated Beneficiaries
Double buggies	£2,500	10 families
Essential baby bundles (incl. sterilisers, bottles, formula, nappies)	£9,000	90 families
Children's coats	£9,000	300 children
Children's bedding (duvet & pillow sets)	£9,000	300 children
Baby mattresses	£3,000	100 babies
Children's socks & underwear	£2,500	300 children

Total	£35,000	
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The provision of these items for low-income households within Reading is to be delivered by The Cowshed, which is a Berkshire-based charity that supports people of all ages facing financial hardship or crisis by freely providing high-quality, essential items.

5. Reasons for the decision:

The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need with the cost of essentials. The fund should help those who are struggling to afford household essentials including energy and water bills, food, and wider essentials. The proposed use of the funding meets these objectives, although the Council continues to seek to support residents before they are in crisis.

The HSF7 scheme within Reading is designed to provide a wide range of flexible support to low-income families across the borough. This support includes providing vouchers to households with Pupil Premium children, an application element to provide direct financial support to low-income households, additional targeted Early Years provision for two-year-olds, and funding to local voluntary and community organisations providing cost-of-living support.

Within this, The Cowshed are currently providing support of free school uniforms to low-income households for the HSF7 scheme. The Cowshed has also been successful at providing clothing and other items for children in low-income households within previous rounds of the Household Support Fund.

This enhanced provision of services for children in low-income households is viewed as an extension of this existing arrangement.

The Household Support Fund allocation to Reading Borough is for 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. All funding allocated to the council needs to be spent within this timeframe and cannot be carried forward to future years.

6. Alternative options considered (if any) and rejected:

Alternative options for service provision and funding allocations of the grant were considered however they were rejected as the allocations and method used for this and previous HSF rounds have found to be effective, and it is important to quickly commence the delivery of the grant, which would be delayed significantly if alternative options had to be implemented.

7. List of open Background Papers:

Policy Committee 8 July 2024 – Household Support Fund Update 2024
Household Support Fund ODN – May 2025

8. List of confidential or exempt Background Papers:

None

9. Any other matters taken into consideration:

Legitimate expectation of consultation

Procedural requirements

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Health implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental or Climate Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Risk Management implications
<input type="checkbox"/> Transparency of Information (FOI etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Privacy Impact Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Act Duties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality Impact Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory duties	<input type="checkbox"/> EU withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces Covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Details of the matters taken into account:

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Resources from the Household Support Fund can be utilised by residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and therefore reduce their energy costs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

The Council has routinely engaged with local voluntary and community organisations to understand the impact they are experiencing in supporting residents with the rising cost of living within the borough. This engagement has enabled the Council to tailor the information and support available to residents who are struggling with the rising cost of living.

The development of the approach and criteria for the application-based element of the Household Support Fund have been guided by the feedback from local voluntary and community organisations on how the rising cost of living can affect residents from a broad range of backgrounds and personal circumstances. For example, over half of the residents being referred to support from the ReadiFood foodbank are single people living alone.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the entire utilisation of the HSF4 grant from DWP. There are no additional equalities impacts to note.

The Household Support Fund is focused on supporting any resident who is experiencing difficulties with the rising cost of living within the borough.

Opportunities to access support from the Household Support fund have been widely promoted across the borough to ensure everyone is aware of them, including to local voluntary and community organisations who have a direct relationship with local communities across the borough.

Elements of the Household Support Fund which are targeted towards families eligible for free school meals are also expected to support other protected characteristics within the borough.

10. Legal considerations

None to note.

11. Financial considerations

The delegated decision, alongside previous decisions, utilises £1,992,735.18 HSF7 grant provided to the Council. There is no impact on the Council's revenue budget.

12. Internal consultations

Details of the HSF7 proposals have been discussed with the Council's Corporate Management Team (which includes the Director of Finance), Lead Member for Corporate Services & Resources and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

Sections 13- 18: To be completed only for Decision A (express delegation from a Committee)

13. The name of the Committee:	Policy Committee
14. Date of the meeting:	08 July 2024
15. Minute number:	18(3)
16. The delegation given by the Committee:	That the Assistant Director for Policy and Performance, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources and the Director of Finance, is delegated to make arrangements for any further funding rounds of the Household Support Fund.
17. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:	None
18. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.	Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources Director of Finance