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Overview of the Household Support Fund

Overview Select Committee
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Benefits & Transactional Finance

Background

- HSF provided **£30m** financial support to local residents during the cost-of-living crisis since its introduction, over seven phases.

- Hindered by short-term extensions and revised scheme objectives in the scheme - ability to plan & provide long- term support limited

- Now concluded and replaced by the **Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF)** from April 2026.

Aims of the Fund

From outset, direct help with **cost of essentials:**

- **Food costs**
- **Energy and water bills**
- **Essential household items**

More recently, evolved to dual focus on crisis relief and long-term prevention, incorporating:

- **Housing costs**
- **Preventative services** including advice, skills and community infrastructure

Successes of the Fund

1. Scale of support delivered since October 2021:

- Over **82,000** payments to households towards energy and water
- Over **400,000** food awards reducing food insecurity
- Over **5,400** essential items such as white goods
- Nearly **6,000** households with housing costs, preventing over 3,000 evictions

2. Wider impact and delivery approach:

- Provided **early interventions at scale** with food vouchers and toiletries over school holidays
- Complimented core benefit & discretionary offer by **ensuring universal access** and **signposting to long-term housing and council tax help**
- Delivered direct applications, partner-assisted distribution and collaborative work with third sector
- Wider benefits - **reduced crisis demand**, **support household resilience**

National recognition

Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) reviewed scheme and praised:

- Approach to **delivery** and **meeting local needs**
- **Collaborative approach** and **robust governance**
- **Flexibility** and **responsiveness to emerging challenges**

Leicester's model was utilised as a **case study example** of how HSF and Discretionary Housing Payments can be successfully integrated in a research paper published by the DWP in February 2026.

Challenges & learning

Challenges included:

- **Short-term funding cycles** limited long-term planning
- **High demand volumes** created pressure on systems and outstripped available funding
- **Frequent changes** in national guidance
- **Risk of dependency** on crisis-based support

A more sustainable and strategic model (CRF) should include:

- **Single, simplified application route** to improve customer journey
- **Continued partnership working**
- Stronger focus on **outcomes and targeting**
- Balance between **crisis support** and **preventative interventions**

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Any questions?