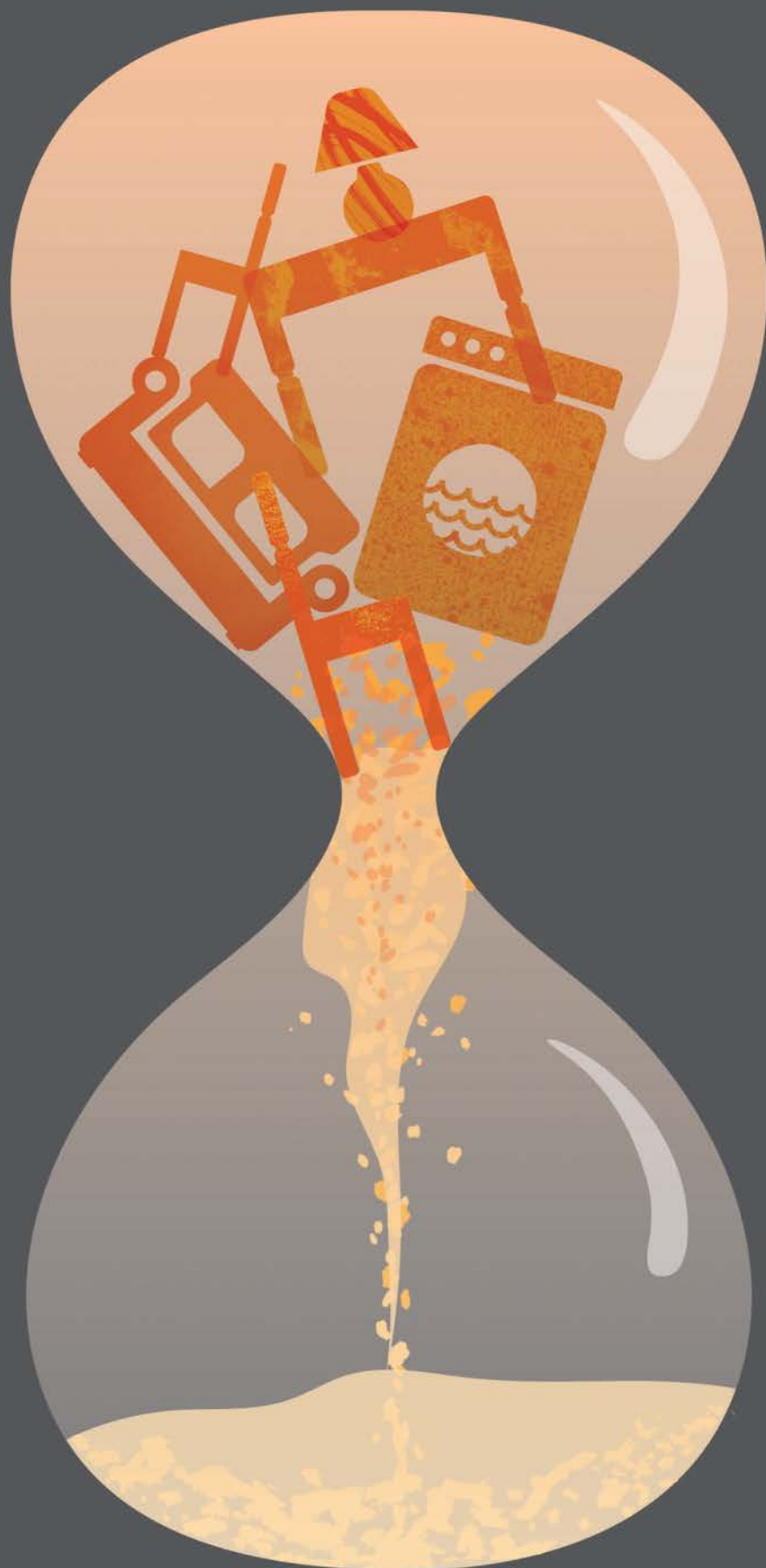


**END
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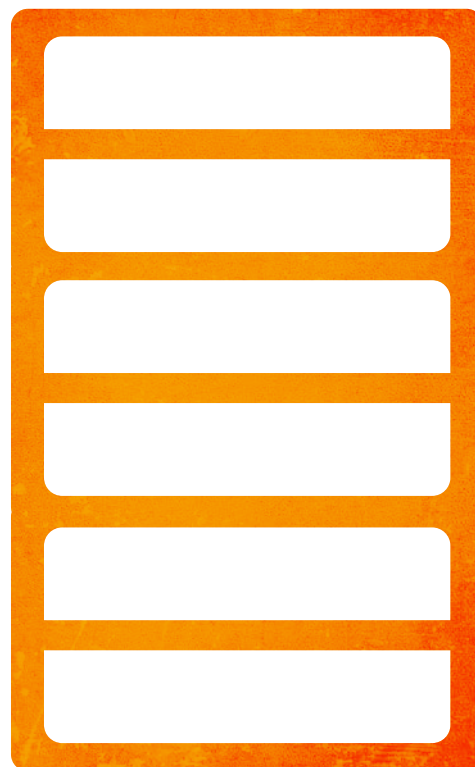
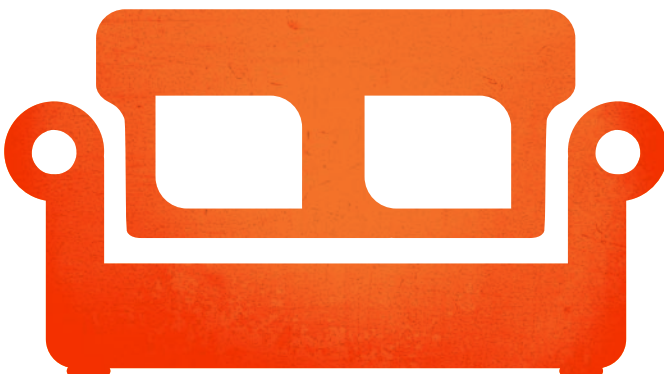


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A Bleak Future for Crisis Support

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



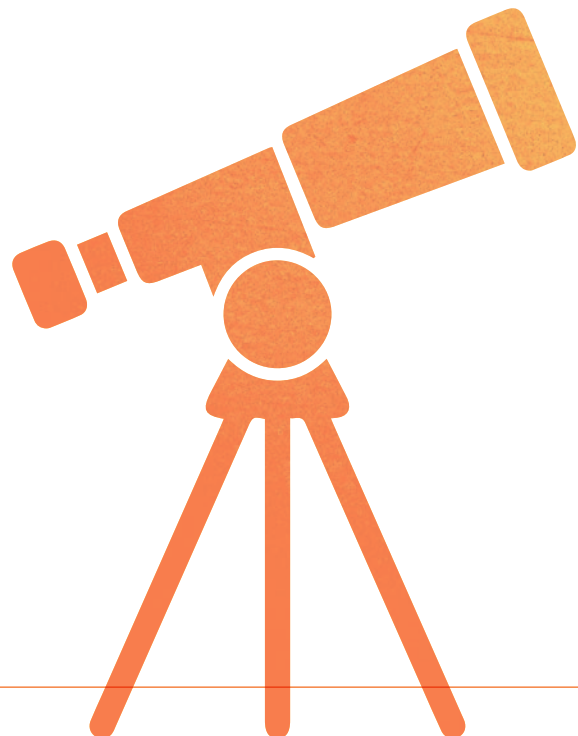
KEY FINDINGS

Spend and Budgets

- In 2023/24, local authorities spent £79.2m on Local Welfare Assistance, (LWA), £11.3m less than 2022/23.
- Core local authority LWA spend fell to £22m in 2023/24, just 29% of the total spend. This is a fall from 38% in 2022/23, and 55% in 2020/21.
- 65% of LWA budgets in 2023/24 came from the Household Support Fund, (HSF), £51.5m. (The remaining funded through sources such as Homelessness Prevention Grants, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund etc).
- If HSF is not renewed, we expect total local authority spend on LWA to fall to £48 million for 2024/25, a 39% reduction, (£31m), on the 2023/24 financial year.

What is available and where?

- 36 local authorities in England offered no Local Welfare Assistance in 2023/24, leaving 14.1m people unable to access support, 24% of the population.
- If HSF ends eight more local authorities will close their LWA scheme, meaning there will be no crisis support available in 44 local authority areas, 29% of English local authorities - cutting off 17.8 million people from vital crisis support.
- The level of support available from existing LWA schemes varies hugely. For example, Islington's furniture spend per capita, (SPC), is £4.17, but furniture SPC falls to £0.03 in areas like Newham and Central Bedfordshire.
- The devolved nations continue to offer much better funded crisis support compared to England.
 - England SPC - £1.37
 - Wales SPC - £10.61
 - Scotland SPC - £9.16



Support for Free School Meal Holiday Vouchers

- 44% of the total HSF 2023/24 budget in England was used to provide holiday food vouchers for families in receipt of free school meals - £370m.
- 22 authorities say they will not continue with FSM vouchers without HSF support, and 20 more say they don't know/aren't decided about how it will be funded. This would mean children in 27% of local authorities could go hungry in the holidays.

Lessons Learnt

- Local authorities say that the short notice, temporary, and short-term nature of HSF limited its impact. More notice of funding would have allowed for policies which aimed to tackle the root causes of poverty and deprivation, hopefully reducing long-term need and dependency.

Ultimately, HSF has been a crucial lifeline for local authorities who have faced increased financial pressure, reduced overall funding and rising demand. But funding should be long-term, and ring-fenced, allowing local authorities to undertake proactive policy measures and will allow for support which can have a more substantive, long-term impact.

Crisis support must be made a statutory part of the welfare safety net, with application-based support available in every local authority with funding to meet the level of demand that is present across the country.

If HSF is not renewed for one final time, there will be large parts of England with no form of crisis support. End Furniture Poverty believe that HSF should be extended for a sixth tranche, at least for six months, ideally for 12 months. We know this is not ideal, it is a sticking plaster, but HSF's continuation is necessary to sustain current levels of crisis support while an urgent review is carried out to devise a secure, adequate future for local authority crisis support.



RECOMMENDATIONS

One local authority told us that the way HSF has been managed was: “no way to administer public funds”¹. We agree. The current method of last-minute extensions and short-term funding for local authorities hinders the delivery of effective policy.

That is why we are providing the following recommendations to ensure that, in the future, the government and local authorities can administer their funds in a way which best supports those experiencing a crisis.

Government

Rather than utilising the existing, albeit patchy, structure of Local Welfare Assistance to deliver extra support during the cost of living crisis, the government chose to create a new fund, the Household Support Fund. We believe the government should simply adequately fund LWA, make it a statutory service, and provide robust guidance.

We need a review of LWA to develop a crisis support system fit to meet the current and future levels of demand and we believe this should be based upon the following principles.

- **A nationwide approach** – crisis support is a vital lifeline for the most vulnerable individuals and families across the country and everyone should be able to access adequate support, wherever they live. There is clearly a need for a wider reform within the welfare state, but a well-funded, statutory, crisis support system will always be required for those in dire need.
- **One last extension** – we cannot allow local authorities to fall off the cliff edge on September 30th when HSF is due to end. We need one last extension of HSF while the review is carried out with matching the current budget of £1bn per annum, pro rata if needed.
- **Sufficient funding** – funding must be sufficient to meet demand. We need a new funding formula for LWA which should consider the poverty and deprivation levels of local communities and ensure that budgets match need. Any new funding formula should take into account the quality of support available in Scotland and Wales, to create parity across the Home Nations. This would mean an annual budget in England of around £600 million, as a minimum.
- **Ring-fenced funding for furniture and appliances** – every local authority should provide the full range of essential furniture items and at least 40% of their LWA funding should be ring-fenced for this, to match the current furniture spend of existing schemes which demonstrates the amount required.
- **A simplified application process with multiple access routes** – crisis support funding should be available via multiple application routes (online, phone, in person), in a simple process, and whilst being made as visible as possible both locally and nationally.

-
- **Data collection to measure impact** – we should not have to issue FOI requests every year to find out the state of crisis support. Local authorities should be required to complete simple annual data collection forms so the impact of crisis support can be clearly measured with lessons learnt for future improvements.
 - **Guarantee our Essentials** – benefit payments must be increased to a level which allows individuals and families to afford the basics; food, housing, clothing and the ability to keep warm and clean. This would lift millions out of poverty, improve living standards, and increase the ability of children from the poorest communities to succeed in education, all whilst reducing the pressure placed on crisis support services like LWA and HSF.
 - **Working Together** – the government should strive to create a system that thrives on cross-sector collaboration, between local authorities, VCOSs, social landlords and more, so that crisis support can be more productive whilst allowing for the maximisation of access, avoiding duplication of support, and allowing for cross-referencing between support pathways.

Local Authorities

Despite the funding uncertainty, it is important that local authorities take steps now to ensure their residents are thoroughly supported through crisis.

- Local authorities must continue, or open, a scheme that is able to provide residents facing a crisis with support such as cash, food and fuel vouchers, as well as all the essential furniture and appliances items they may require. This fund should be robust enough to adequately address levels of need within their local area.
- All schemes must be sufficiently advertised locally to ensure there is maximum engagement from those in need.
- The application process for an LWA scheme needs to be robust, but it should also be simple, easily understandable, and applications quickly processed to minimise further undue stress to users.
- The provision of furniture and appliances should focus on the delivery of 'items' rather than 'cash' or 'vouchers'². Those experiencing furniture poverty are often also dealing with issues such as food poverty and unaffordable bills which can lead to cash for furniture being diverted. This also avoids unforeseen delivery and installation charges for applicants. We support the Cash First approach for other types of support.

ABOUT END FURNITURE POVERTY

End Furniture Poverty is the campaigning and social research arm of FRC Group, a group of charities and 100% not-for-profit social businesses. FRC Group has been providing furniture, both new and preloved, to people living in Furniture Poverty for over 35 years and reducing and eradicating Furniture Poverty is FRC Group's core mission.

End Furniture Poverty was created in 2015 to raise national awareness of the issue of furniture poverty and to develop scaled solutions to drive change.

We carry out research to allow us to better understand the causes and impact of furniture poverty, and to provide evidence-based solutions. We then use these findings to inform campaigns across the social housing sector, as well as lobbying local and central government, for increased furniture provision.

End Furniture Poverty also works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to ensure that existing furniture provision is widespread and accessible, and we play a key role in broader campaigns to alleviate poverty.

We also provide ongoing support to social landlords, charities, local authorities and others to help them to establish furniture schemes, to ensure that everyone has access to the essential furniture items that they need to lead a secure life.

This is End Furniture Poverty's fifth report examining crisis support. We are also undertaking a campaign called [Make a House a Home](#), lobbying for at least 10% of social housing properties to be made available as furnished. Information for this campaign can be found on our website, along with a myriad of useful research, guidance and support.

Together we can End Furniture Poverty.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the local authorities who took the time to complete our two FOI requests, especially those who added in their own comments and thoughts. We would also like to thank the third sector organisations who gave their time to talk to us about their experiences of the Household Support Fund.

INTRODUCTION TO CRISIS SUPPORT



WHY IT'S NECESSARY AND WHAT REFORM IS NEEDED?

Organisations like the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Institute for Public Policy Research have made it abundantly clear that the current social security safety net available across the UK simply is not adequate. It no longer covers the essentials for families³, instead it is acting as a major contributing factor in a rise in worsening physical and mental health amongst the least well-off in the country⁴. This is why crisis support has become increasingly vital in recent years.

Without the additional government support through the Household Support Fund, and the Covid grants in previous years, there would have been millions plunged into increased financial turmoil and issues like hunger and deprivation would have been exacerbated even further.

This, our fifth report examining crisis support, will demonstrate that uncertainty is at an all-time high for local welfare provision and it faces a bleak future without urgent intervention. We are now on tranche five of HSF which was again extended via its last-minute, short-notice, inclusion within the March budget of 2024. It is set to expire in a short timeframe, on September 30th, 2024, unless the government chooses to intervene and ensure that its vital role in underpinning local authority crisis support continues while a longer-term review takes place.

It is important to document the impact of HSF on the provision of crisis support and the implementation of Local Welfare Assistance schemes, in order to make the case for an extension of this source of funding. But ultimately, there must be a longer-term solution that can encourage a more proactive and preventative solution to combat the vast need that is continually growing across the UK.

At End Furniture Poverty we examine the extent of furniture poverty and the impact that funds like HSF or Local Welfare Assistance are having on the provision of white goods and furniture, but of course our LWA reports examine the full range of support, including food, fuel, cash awards, and other support, offered by crisis schemes.

Our main focus is on the provision of crisis support in England because Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales all have centralised systems of providing crisis support and, although these systems are far from perfect, they are still almost always more effective and impactful than the English equivalent. Scotland and Wales published their data online however Northern Ireland did not have data readily available, so, due to the urgency of publishing this report before the end of HSF, we could only use Northern Ireland data up to the 2022/23 financial year.

CRISIS SUPPORT – A BRIEF HISTORY

Crisis support has a long-held place in the fabric of the social safety net of Britain dating back to the 1930s, demonstrating that we have always had, and will always have, a need for this type of support.

Local Welfare Assistance in its current form (and its equivalent approaches in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) replaced the Discretionary Social Fund in 2013. DSF was abandoned in an attempt to keep spending under control and to allow local authorities to run schemes that offer effective and tailored support for their communities that target genuine need^{5,6}. The devolved nations opted to replace the DSF with centralised schemes that would be under the control of their devolved governments. In England, this was not the case.

Crisis support was devolved to a local authority level and although funding was initially ring-fenced, this quickly ended and, as austerity bit and local authority budgets came under greater pressure, LWA budgets gradually declined and, in some areas, vanished entirely. As need grew and central government funding fell, the resources available for local crisis support would equate to only a fraction of its previous scale (See 'LWA Spend' for more context).

During the Covid pandemic, the government introduced additional grants for local authorities, ostensibly for LWA schemes, and then in the autumn of 2021, they launched the Household Support Fund, a significant funding pot for local authorities with tight spending deadlines and guidance, to support local residents post-Covid and during the cost of living crisis. The Household Support Fund has been extended four times and is currently in the six-month tranche five, which began on April 1st, 2024.

The Household Support Fund was also distributed to the devolved nations using the Barnett Formula however as they already had well-functioning centralised crisis support schemes, the respective governments told us that they did not use the funding for any new scheme, but as part of the general funding settlement.

Impact of Crisis Support

Crisis support undoubtedly has a huge impact on people's lives and can transform the mental and physical health of the individual helped. Not only this but there is also a tremendous cost saving for the public purse as individuals who are able to access a secure safety net with a crisis support system that strengthens their financial resilience are less likely to become a burden on other aspects of public services. Analysis from Milton Keynes Council estimated that an investment of £0.5 million could yield savings in other public services amounting to £9.7 million⁷.

For example, if crisis support can provide a fridge, freezer or cooker to a family then it can allow for them to maintain a healthier diet – reducing the greater impact on the NHS. Crisis support is a tremendous opportunity to provide proactive, preventative support that can mitigate the effects of poverty and reduce the strain that exists on wider public services.

During our research, we heard from local authorities who reiterated that they are fearful of the impact that a cancellation of HSF will have on their communities and the added costs accrued through demand for other services.

“Our vulnerable residents, and others who suffer from an immediate crisis, will have less support available to them as LAs and voluntary sector organisations feel the impact of increased demand with a real reduction in available resources. This could push more demand into social work teams, resulting in increased expense for councils at a time when budgets have reduced.”⁸ – Shropshire Council

“Communities may not be able to access the support they need, or support will be delayed meaning issues will become more complex and could lead to people in hospital due to cold homes, malnutrition or more.”⁹ – Hertfordshire County Council

“The loss of HSF would exacerbate existing levels of poverty and hardship and store up societal problems for the future resulting in additional costs.”¹⁰ – Newham Council

When local authorities are worrying to the extent that they believe it will exacerbate poverty in such an extreme way that malnutrition becomes a serious issue, it simply cannot be considered good enough.

Until longer-term solutions are put in place, one of the only things propping up the current lacklustre safety net is HSF funding, and this cannot be allowed to end. The negative implications on millions of people’s lives would be truly immense.

Furniture Poverty

Furniture poverty is the inability to access, or afford to buy or maintain, any household furniture item or appliance, including floor and window coverings, that are essential to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living.

The provision of furniture and white goods to households who are in dire need, and cannot afford to purchase or replace items themselves, is a key aspect of crisis support. The provision of furniture can support individuals in a myriad of circumstances. This may include providing window coverings or curtains for someone fleeing domestic abuse; the lack of window coverings for people in these circumstances has been proven to exacerbate their anxiety and has a negative mental impact¹¹. Or it may be that someone is moving into social housing only to find out that it is entirely unfurnished, without as much as flooring, and they simply cannot cope with the sudden expense of furnishing an entire property¹². Or simply needing to replace a broken cooker.

Previous End Furniture Poverty research has displayed the full extent of furniture poverty. There are over six million people living in furniture poverty which includes one million people living in ‘deep furniture poverty’, without three or more essential items. There are also 740,000 adults living without a bed for their child, 870,000 people living without curtains and blinds, 260,000 living without a fridge, and 400,000 people living without a cooker¹³. These figures are shocking and have inevitably increased in recent months.

Crisis support has a tremendous impact on people in need, improving the ability of the most vulnerable in society to access essential items that would otherwise be far too costly. However, there should be a more comprehensive approach to tackling furniture poverty including the following:

- We urgently need an increased number of furnished tenancies in the social housing sector as at least 26% of social housing tenants are living in furniture poverty. Currently only 2% of social homes are provided as furnished, compared to 29% in the private rental sector¹⁴. EFP is campaigning for at least 10% of all social housing to be let as furnished, based on the 2% that currently exists and adds the 8% of social housing tenants who are living in 'deep furniture poverty', living without three or more essential items. It also begins to bring the level of furniture provision within the social housing sector in line with the private sector.
- The current system of social security must be made more robust and accessible for those in need. This would drastically reduce the demand for crisis support as an adequate social security net, that ensures people are able to afford the essentials, will reduce people's reliance on crisis support to afford key items.

Economic Conditions and The Social Security Net

"It's becoming impossible for parents to meet even the basic needs of their children. The cost of living crisis is causing families to cut their budgets – many of which were already small to begin with. We're also seeing that families who've never needed financial support before are desperate for it now. One small change can leave a family completely vulnerable."¹⁵ – Action for Children

Britain has been through challenging economic conditions, not just in recent years with wildly inconsistent inflation and the cost of living crisis, but over the past 15 years where wage stagnation and low growth have combined to intensify the financial strain individuals and families are under, and the impact of the previous government's austerity programme.

In the UK, 14.3 million people find themselves in relative poverty (after housing costs), which amounts to 21% of the population¹⁶. According to research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, there were also 3,848,300 people living in destitution in 2022, including a total of 1,035,600 children¹⁷. As furniture and white goods are often the most expensive items a family need to acquire, this level of destitution makes it impossible for them to independently afford these items.

HSF has consistently been used by local authorities to help the most vulnerable members of society on Universal Credit to effectively 'top up' their ineffective and insufficient income – with the majority of HSF spent in the form of targeted grants, specifically giving funds to those already on means-tested benefits (See figure 16).

Over the past decade, we have seen huge shifts in the social security system in the UK. During the COVID pandemic there was a much needed and very impactful £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit which was cut in September 2021, resulting in a significant reduction in the financial resources of those already facing difficulties. In prior years there was also the introduction of a two-child limit in the receipt of child benefit payments as well as an effective freeze on welfare payments which are ideally supposed to rise in line with inflation, along with the benefit cap and the 'bedroom tax'. Millions of families are affected by benefit deductions which leaves them without sufficient income to meet their daily living costs, let alone deal with a crisis such as a broken appliance.

HSF has been a much-needed addition to the social security system. But crisis support should not be a replacement for a secure safety net that exists within the welfare system. It should be an emergency fund that exists only to support those facing particularly unique circumstances such as a financial emergency or unexpected costs. The universal credit system should provide ample support for individuals and families to feed and house themselves whilst ensuring they can keep themselves clean and warm. Not being able to afford food is a crisis. Not being able to afford food consistently, over a number of weeks, months or even years, is a sign of a systemic issue that needs to be addressed. As polling shows, over 66% of the UK population believes that Universal Credit payments are too low¹⁸. If central government is not willing to take heed of those struggling to get by, they should listen to the majority of the British public who believe that a change is needed, an uplift is needed.



REPORT FINDINGS

What is an LWA Scheme

Our definition of an LWA scheme is as follows:

- The scheme is a named service; for example: 'Crisis Support Scheme', 'Local Welfare Provision', 'Help in a Crisis', 'Household Support' etc.
- The scheme has an identifiable budget and/or line of expenditure. While this can come entirely from the Household Support Fund, it must be identifiable as a separate stream.
- The scheme provides direct grants (cash or in-kind) to an individual/household.
- The scheme has a claims process, via which a member of the public can apply.
- The scheme has a specific webpage on the local authority's website which provides information about the scheme.

LWA Operational Schemes

In the years between 2019/20 and 2022/23 the number of local authorities without a scheme rose from 25 to 37. This occurred as local authorities faced increased financial strain and their budgets became even more stretched as the cost of living crisis and inflationary pressures hit.

Figure 1 - Local authorities who did not have an operational LWA scheme in 2023/24

Bexley	Isle of Wight	Reading
Bournemouth,	Isles Of Scilly	Redbridge
Christchurch and Poole	Kingston Upon Thames	Slough
Buckinghamshire	Leicestershire	Southampton
Croydon	Lincolnshire	Staffordshire
Devon	North East Lincolnshire	Stoke-on-Trent
Dudley	North Lincolnshire	West Berkshire
East Sussex	North Northamptonshire	West Northamptonshire
Enfield	Nottingham	Westmorland and Furness
Gateshead	Nottinghamshire	Wolverhampton
Hampshire	Peterborough	Worcestershire
Harrow	Plymouth	
Hillingdon	Portsmouth	

In 2023/24 the number of local authorities without a Local Welfare Assistance scheme has fallen to 36, listed above, however it is important to emphasise that this does not mean the situation has improved. Need within communities has increased, meanwhile the percentage of core funding local authorities are allocating to Local Welfare Assistance schemes has decreased. This has served to make local authorities across England ever more reliant upon HSF to prop up LWA spending.

We have found that eight local authorities will close their scheme if HSF ends as expected on Sept 30th, taking the total number of closed schemes up to 44. An additional 15 will also reduce their scheme by up to as much as 98%, with the average reduction being 46.3%.

This will mean 17.8 million people will be left without an avenue of accessing crisis support and a further 6.35 million will live in an authority with greatly reduced resources.

In 2023/24 Lewisham, Oxfordshire and Rotherham opened an LWA scheme however Harrow closed their scheme saying that they wanted to avoid duplication with HSF. All Harrow residents wishing to access an LWA scheme in 2023/24 were instead directed toward HSF and they are yet to make a decision about the future of the scheme post-HSF. Westmorland and Furness are also a local authority formed in April 2023 which did not run an LWA scheme for the 2023/24 financial year.

Outlier Schemes

What is an outlier?

Our definition of an outlier is any scheme which meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. has a scheme but individuals cannot apply, they have to be referred by an approved referral partner for support.
2. has a scheme but do not use any core funding for it.
3. has a scheme but it only provides loans and not grants.
4. has a scheme but excludes people from certain aspects of support based on their housing tenure.

Outlier schemes in 2023/24

In 2023/24 we identified a number of 'outlier' schemes and these are listed below:

Shropshire – They have a Local Welfare Provision scheme, but it has, in recent times, become intertwined with HSF to provide a single application route for users. However, once HSF ends, they will revert to a traditional Local Welfare Assistance scheme. This means that currently they do not meet our criteria for a scheme.

West Sussex – They do not maintain a local welfare scheme however do provide furniture and white goods through third-party organisations like 'Furni-Help Furniture Charity' and 'Grandad's Front Room'.

Bromley, Darlington, Lancashire, Newcastle and North Yorkshire are also outliers as they are referral-only schemes. This means that an applicant must utilise third party organisations to access support. In 2022/23 there were a total of eight authorities that were referral-only, it is a positive sign that more authorities have opened their scheme to direct applications.

It is also important to highlight Liverpool City Council which has an LWA scheme, but their Home Needs awards, (awards for furniture and appliances), are restricted for tenants of registered social landlords who are only awarded items in 'exceptional circumstances' - which is not clearly defined on their website. This has been done as a cost saving measure and they are working with local social landlords, (with the support of End Furniture Poverty), to rightly encourage them to step up and provide their own support through furnished tenancy schemes, however it is limiting the support available now for many within their authority.

There are an additional 18 local authorities with LWA schemes that use £0 core funding, which means they are investing nothing from their own budgets. This means they will have to reallocate funds and/or reduce the size of their scheme drastically after the end of HSF.

Figure 2 - All local authorities with an LWA scheme that was 100% funded by HSF 2023/24

Barnsley	Halton	Sandwell
Blackburn with Darwen	Haringey	Solihull
Blackpool	Havering	St Helens
Bolton	Medway	Suffolk
Bradford	North Tyneside	Swindon
Ealing	Redcar and Cleveland	Thurrock

It is also important to note that there are a significant number of Local Authorities facing difficulties with funding themselves, with one in five at high risk of needing to issue Section 114s in the coming years¹⁹, effectively declaring bankruptcy. There have already been seven local authorities that have issued Section 114s since 2020, meaning they are only able to fund statutory services. As Local Welfare Assistance schemes are not a statutory service, schemes will be forced into immediate closure. Due to this worrying situation, EFP advocates for crisis support to become classified as a statutory service to ensure that, even when a local authority faces budgetary difficulties, it is not the most vulnerable who suffer the consequences.



LOCAL AUTHORITIES' OPINIONS

The post-HSF landscape²⁰

Resources

"Without further funding, the council does not have any budget to provide support to communities and cannot fund voluntary sector organisations to deliver food and other essential support (...) there will be a significant impact to individuals and communities."

"The impact on the community will be immense as there will be nowhere for them to go for support and this will put enormous pressure on the foodbank and other local charities as well as no means of providing FSM."

"If the basic provision of welfare benefits was sufficient to meet households needs and the private rented housing market worked, then there would be less need to maintain this discretionary sticking plaster."

"We anticipate a cliff edge of support available to the most vulnerable, with wide reaching impacts."

"We anticipate a cliff edge of support available to the most vulnerable, with wide reaching impacts."

"If the basic provision of welfare benefits was sufficient to meet households needs and the private rented housing market worked, then there would be less need to maintain this discretionary sticking plaster."

LWA Provision

"Demand will be increased, and funding will be exhausted. Need has not diminished. The loss of the HSF could leave the London Borough of Newham with no local welfare support scheme from 2024/25 which would exacerbate existing levels of poverty and hardship and store up societal problems for the future resulting in additional costs."

External Partner Agencies

"Reduced or ceased council local welfare provision schemes will push additional demand into the voluntary sector, who will have significant capacity issues in dealing with this increased demand (e.g. extra demand on food banks who are reporting a reduction in donations)."

Communities

"HSF has been a lifeline through the most difficult period of financial hardship (...) it will have a direct adverse impact on our communities."

"There may be an increased need for community-led initiatives and a greater reliance on local support networks to fill the gap."

"Issues will become more complex and could lead to people in hospital due to cold homes, malnutrition or more."

"Households will struggle even more. We will expect to see our council tax collection to also be affected even more."

"Our vulnerable residents (...) will have less support available to them as LAs and voluntary sector organisations feel the impact of increased demand with a real reduction in available resource. This could push more demand into social work teams, resulting in increased expense for councils at a time when budgets have reduced."

"Child poverty is a significant concern. Access to alternative support and provision is limited for people in financial crisis. Access to community provision and support for those who are isolated will be reduced."

"This could result in increased poverty levels, housing insecurity, and limited access to essential services. Furthermore, mental health and well-being could be adversely affected, leading to increased stress and anxiety among affected individuals and families."

"The loss of HSF would exacerbate existing levels of poverty and hardship and store up societal problems for the future resulting in additional costs."

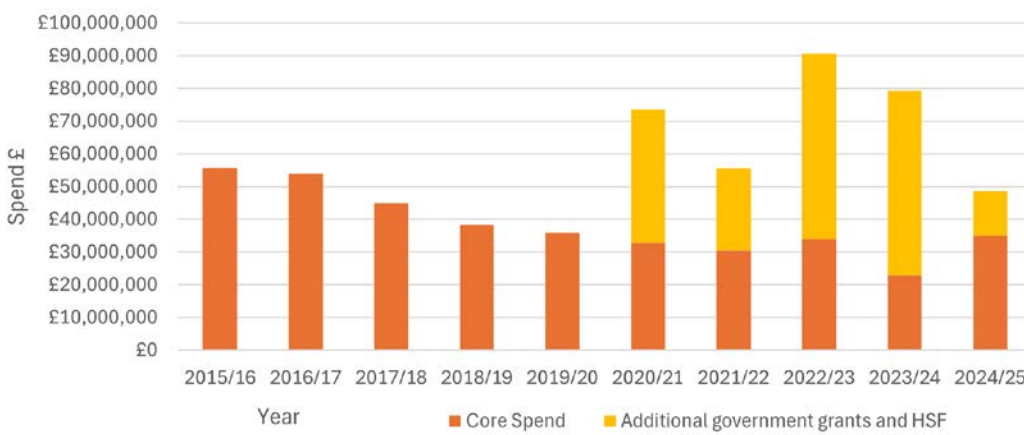
"More people either falling into poverty or experiencing some of the detrimental effects of poverty."



LWA SPENDING

In last year's report End Furniture Poverty were pleased to reveal that local authorities had been spending their highest sums on Local Welfare Assistance since funding became part of the Revenue Support Grant in 2015/16²¹ (RSG is a central government grant given to local authorities which can be used to finance revenue expenditure on any service). This trend has not continued.

Figure 3 - Total LWA Expenditure in England over time



In 2023/24 a total of £79 million was spent on Local Welfare Assistance, this is a 13% drop on the previous year, a fall of over £11 million. As figure 3 shows, despite the large decline over the previous financial year, it is still the second-largest sum spent on Local Welfare Assistance since funding became part of the Revenue Support Grant, so it clearly shows the positive impact that HSF has had. The amount spent on LWA since HSF's introduction has often been around double what it was before this support was available, with just under £40 million spent in 2018/19 and 2019/20. This reiterates the importance of additional funding continuing, until a comprehensive review of crisis support is undertaken.

Figure 3 also includes a projection of LWA spend for the 2024/25 financial year based on our FOI responses, including the six months of HSF funding as part of tranche five. As things stand, between 2023/24 and 2024/25 there is expected to be a reduction in the size of LWA budgets by £31 million, a 39% decrease, and local authority core spend on Local Welfare Assistance will drop to the inadequate levels of 2019/20.

The fact that budgets remain at the same monetary level after a period of economic uncertainty and significant inflationary pressures means that, in reality, it is a real terms decrease of 21% between the LWA budgets of 2019/20 and 2024/25. This is at a time when demand is at an all-time high. The poorest individuals and families have been hit hardest by the cost of living crisis and the number of people unable to afford the basic essentials continues to rise. At a time like this, crisis support is crucial.

Immediate Post-HSF Landscape

Local authorities are using HSF funding for the first six months of 2024/25 but we estimate that the maximum budget available for LWA in England in the latter six months of the current financial year is £22m, the total amount of core spend reported by local authorities for the whole year. It is more likely that some of this will have been spent between April and September 2024 so it could be as low as £10m to £15m between October 2024 and March 2025.

Figure 3 does show that, in 2024/25, the contribution of HSF has reduced in comparison to previous years, with the value of core spend increasing compared to 2023/24. The reduction in the amount of HSF being allocated to LWA could be due to numerous reasons. It is possible that, due to the short notice announcement of HSF's extension into tranche five, (less than three weeks before HSF was due to end), local authorities had finalised an LWA budget prior to the fund's continuation. The fifth tranche of HSF also only covers the first six months of the 2024/25 financial year and, as local authorities are aware of the importance of LWA, they have managed to reallocate limited funds from elsewhere to prevent further reductions in the size of their scheme.

We agree that this short-term 'sticking plaster' approach should not be continued but the current situation requires one last extension. If HSF is not renewed for a further six or, ideally, 12 months while a much-needed review of long-term crisis support is undertaken, there will be a huge impact that is felt directly by the most vulnerable in society.

As local authorities have told us during our research process, **"this could push more demand into social work teams, resulting in increased expense for councils at a time when budgets have reduced"**²² whilst other local authorities have spoken about their inability to cope with demand and continue to support VCSOs without the addition of HSF funding.

Later in the year, End Furniture Poverty is set to publish a full cost/benefit analysis which explores this issue in depth and will show how a reduction in Local Welfare Assistance spend can have dire consequences on wider public services. As previously mentioned, Milton Keynes Council was able to estimate that an investment of £0.5 million could generate savings to the wider public purse of £9.7 million. As a result, the removal of HSF and the destruction of crisis support available to communities across the country (with LWA spend reducing by 39%) is likely to have an impact in the hundreds of millions of pounds across public services. This includes the NHS, education, and social services to name a few.

Yet another initially worrying trend evident from our data is that the vast majority of the decrease in LWA spend in 2023/24 is from a reduction in local authority core spend, meaning that HSF is making up an ever-larger proportion of LWA spend. For context, between 2020/21 and 2022/23 there was between £30.5 million and £34 million of core spend allocated on Local Welfare Assistance schemes. This varied from as high as 55% of all LWA spend in 2020/21 down to 38% in 2022/23. However, we were relieved to see this did not continue in 2024/25 budgets but it still an element to watch.

In 2023/24, only £22 million of local authority core spend was allocated to Local Welfare Assistance, just 29% of total LWA spend. £22 million cannot adequately address the rampant need that is present across communities in England. If HSF is not extended beyond September 30th, the consequences are clear. Either local authorities will slash LWA budgets so much that millions more will be left without a viable path of crisis support or, local authorities will be forced to make substantive cuts across several of its departments to sustain support at its current level. Neither is ideal, both will have a profound and long-lasting impact on people's lives.

“The demand on the local welfare provision is expected to increase and increasing any support in this area will put a significant strain on council finances and the wider support schemes that are available. Schools, Community groups, local charities and advice agencies will also see an increase in demand for support that they will likely not be able to meet.”²³

– Cheshire West and Chester Council

“We would like to deliver a more proactive LWP to prevent hardship/crisis but the current demand levels in HSF and the uncertainty around the future may make this difficult.”²⁴

– Milton Keynes Council

Allowing authorities to plan with a sustained amount of funding will allow them to not only fund their LWA scheme but will facilitate the creation of innovative, proactive policy solutions that attack the systemic, deep-rooted causes of poverty and deprivation within their communities.

Also, throughout this analysis, it is important to note that Local Welfare Assistance support is limited by funds, not by demand. This is clear when viewing current LWA spend from a historical perspective. Although 2022/23 and 2023/24 proved to be the largest LWA spends since 2015/16, it is still only a fraction of the support which was available in earlier years. In 2010/11 crisis support spending on comparable aspects of local welfare was £285 million. Meaning that the 2023/24 budgets represent just 28% of this sum. Adjusted for inflation, this is a real terms decrease of 81%.

Figure 4 - Total LWA Expenditure in England, including pre-Revenue Support Grant figures

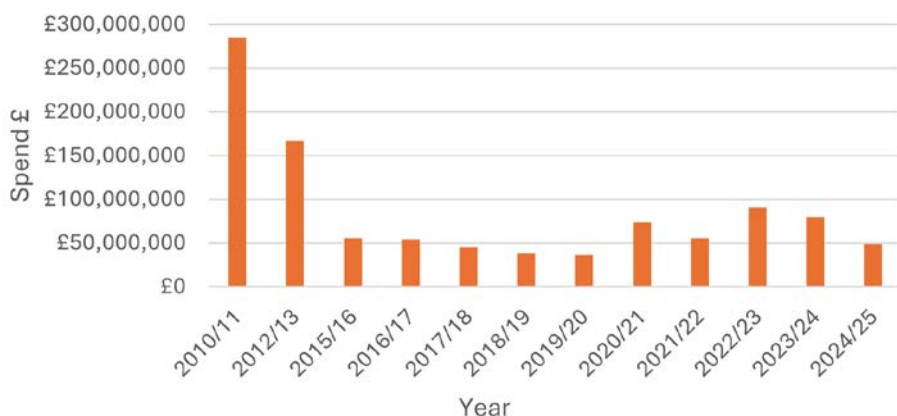


Figure 4 shows modern LWA spend from its last years as the Discretionary Social Fund to now, clearly showing that support available post-2015, even with HSF included, is only a fraction of that available through the DSF.

If the Discretionary Social Fund budget for 2010/11 was adjusted for inflation to fit the 2023/24 financial year, then there would be an annual LWA spend of £409 million. A vast amount larger than the £79 million spent in actuality.

In addition to support from LWA being limited by funds, it is also likely that there are many people who may need support yet are unaware of the scheme’s existence. This is why it is important that these schemes are advertised clearly, both locally and nationally. Our previous reports have highlighted the problems created by the lack of a national identity for local welfare assistance, something that the national Household Support Fund was able to overcome²⁵.

There are also challenges for some who may be financially vulnerable yet are unable to access support. This is evident in authorities such as Liverpool City Council with Home Needs awards being limited to restrict the access of social housing tenants.

English Spend Per Capita, (SPC)

In last year's report, *Cliff Edge – The State of Crisis Support*²⁶, we were able to highlight positive developments with an increased spend per capita of 60%²⁷ but sadly this has now significantly decreased. As with overall LWA spend, the spend per capita has fallen from £1.62 to £1.37. This represents a fall of 13%.

The reduction in per capita spend is broadly emblematic of a decrease in LWA spend across local authorities. However, there are positive outliers who either maintain a large per capita spend or have increased their spend over the past year. The top three schemes for per capita spend are Warwickshire which had an SPC of £11.88, Kirklees with an SPC of £11.22 and Thurrock with an SPC of £8.69 (to view the SPC of all local authorities with an LWA scheme, view figure 20 in the 'Appendix' section). There are also examples of authorities such as Rochdale who have seen a significant increase in per capita spend from £1.75 in 2022/23 to £5.21 in 2023/24. This rise is a small positive in what should otherwise be considered a disappointing year for Local Welfare Assistance.

What is also evident is the change in the average award value from LWA schemes and what this says about the rapidly rising demand for services. In 2022/23 there were a total of 406,009 successful applications to LWA schemes with an average award value of £223. Due to reduced overall spending and increased demand, we have seen successful applications rise to 455,250 in 2023/24, with the average award now sitting at just £169.

Local authorities need long-term guarantees of funding; allowing them to implement more proactive, preventative approaches to Local Welfare Assistance that can treat the problem at its cause rather than being exclusively a reactionary avenue of support.

Had local authorities known in advance that they would have a share of a £3 billion funding pot to help vulnerable residents, it could have had a significantly larger impact. It would have allowed local authorities to take time to consider their initiatives and policies before arriving at the best solution that can be specifically catered for their local residents, directly combatting the systemic causes of poverty and deprivation.



LIFE ON THE BRINK – LWA SCHEMES SET TO DISAPPEAR

There are already 36 local authorities who do not have an LWA scheme, 23% of all authorities. That means there are 14.1 million people who are currently unable to access this form of crisis support when they're facing difficult circumstances. This number is already far too high, yet it is set to drastically increase if HSF comes to an end.

Last year we found that the majority of funding for Local Welfare Assistance came from funding sources other than authorities' core budgets. This is the same in 2023/24 but to an even greater extent. There has been a 33% reduction in the amount of core spend on LWA and this increased reliance on HSF has created a worrying predicament for its potential closure.

Figure 5 – Table of local authorities with a core spend of under 50% in 2023/24

Barnsley	0%	Swindon	0%	Coventry	25%
Bolton	0%	Thurrock	0%	Cheshire West and Chester	30%
Bradford	0%	Kirklees	0%	Liverpool	30%
Brighton and Hove	0%	Central Bedfordshire	5%	Hammersmith & Fulham	31%
Ealing	0%	Newham	5%	Trafford	35%
Halton	0%	Stockton-on-Tees	5%	Doncaster	35%
Haringey	0%	Warwickshire	5%	Barnet	38%
Havering	0%	Waltham Forest	6%	Blackburn with Darwen	40%
Leeds	0%	Norfolk	6%	Greenwich	42%
Medway	0%	Bury	8%	Stockport	42%
North Tyneside	0%	Southend on Sea	8%	Tower Hamlets	44%
Redcar and Cleveland	0%	Hull	12%	Bristol	45%
Rotherham	0%	Hertfordshire	14%	City of London	47%
Sandwell	0%	Walsall	16%	Rochdale	49%
Solihull	0%	Westminster	16%	Surrey	49%
St Helens	0%	Derbyshire	17%		
Suffolk	0%	Hackney	18%		

The above is a list of all local authorities in which core spend accounts for less than 50% of their LWA budget. We have excluded all local authorities where they fund a significant portion of LWA through other non-core spend sources (such as Homelessness Prevention Grants, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund etc.) so as to only show the direct impact of HSF. These are councils who find themselves in a particularly precarious situation as the majority of their LWA scheme could vanish with no extension of HSF. This is a decision which would impact the coverage of crisis support for 18.5 million people.

Figure 6 - Local authorities where schemes will close/will be reduced if HSF ends (estimated % reduction) - All estimates made by LAs in their FOI responses

Barnsley	Scheme will close	Medway	98%	Haringey	30.04%
Birmingham	Scheme will close	Brighton and Hove	80%	North Tyneside	27%
Bradford	Scheme will close	Thurrock	80%	South Tyneside	20%-40%
Hartlepool	Scheme will close	Solihull	77%	Gloucestershire	20%
Herefordshire	Scheme will close	Southend on Sea	77%	Lambeth	20%
Suffolk	Scheme will close	Hull	45%	Surrey	20%
Sutton	Scheme will close	Rochdale	40%	Doncaster	10%
Westminster	Scheme will close	Walsall	40%		

Above is a list of all local authorities who have told us that they expect to see a reduction in their LWA spend in 2023/24 and how much they expect it to reduce by. These estimates vary from between 10% all the way up to 98% showing the potential detrimental effect that the non-continuation of HSF could cause. The average reduction across these authorities stands at 46.3%.

Additionally, it is important to note that there are also local authorities who did not state that HSF's removal would reduce LWA spend but they have planned a 2024/25 LWA budget that is substantially smaller than 2023/24. This occurs as, in previous years, local authorities have assigned a budget for the following year that comprises 100% core spend before proceeding to 'top up' this budget with HSF once available. Take Bury for example who, in 2023/24 spent £1.6 million on LWA but, in 2024/25, expect to spend just £125,000, unless they are provided additional funds. This is a significant reason why LWA budgets for 2024/25 are 39% lower than the spend for 2023/24

Local authorities know the importance of crisis support. But without long-term, ring-fenced support, we cannot expect local authorities to keep propping up their Local Welfare Assistance schemes, a non-statutory service, as their financial situations grow increasingly dire. LWA must become a statutory service to ensure that it can continue at a consistent level so that the most vulnerable always have access to support during a time of financial struggle.

Funding for 2024/25

As part of our FOI, we asked each local authority how much of their 2024/25 budget was expected to be funded through HSF for that following financial year.

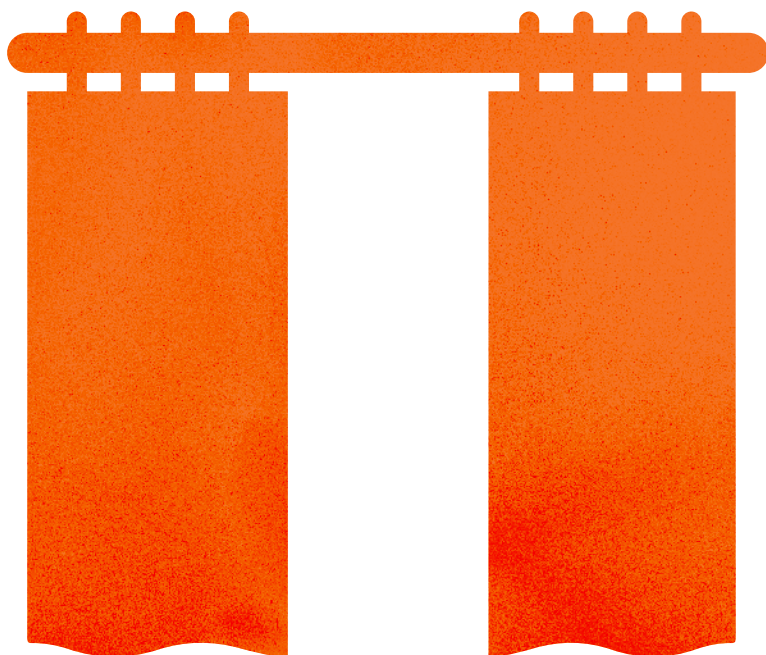
Figure 7 - Local authorities projecting 100% HSF funded LWA scheme in 2024/25

Barnsley	Bradford	Halton	Swindon
Birmingham	Suffolk	Havering	

This table shows that seven local authorities are planning on entirely funding their 2024/25 LWA budget through HSF; this means that ending HSF on September 30th would immediately reduce their 2024/25 budget to £0, (Swindon specify that their LWA budget will be funded by HSF or Council Reserves. So, if HSF is not extended their scheme may continue, but this is not financially viable long-term).

Also, within the table are the local authorities who have specifically stated that they are awaiting further HSF announcements before finalising their budgets. These are authorities which will likely be vulnerable to HSF ending. These include Bradford and Halton who only have a 6-month budget set for 2023/24 – which will be reviewed at the end of HSF tranche five, and Greenwich and Bury are hoping for an HSF 'top up' The most worrying example is Kirklees, they say they are waiting to hear whether HSF will be extended into a sixth tranche before finalising their funding. But, in 2023/24 their LWA budget was made up of 99.94% HSF funds.

Clearly, the removal of this sticking plaster support from central government could essentially wipe out crisis support in Kirklees. This is a situation evident in authorities across the country. If HSF ends, the impact on crisis support will be calamitous.

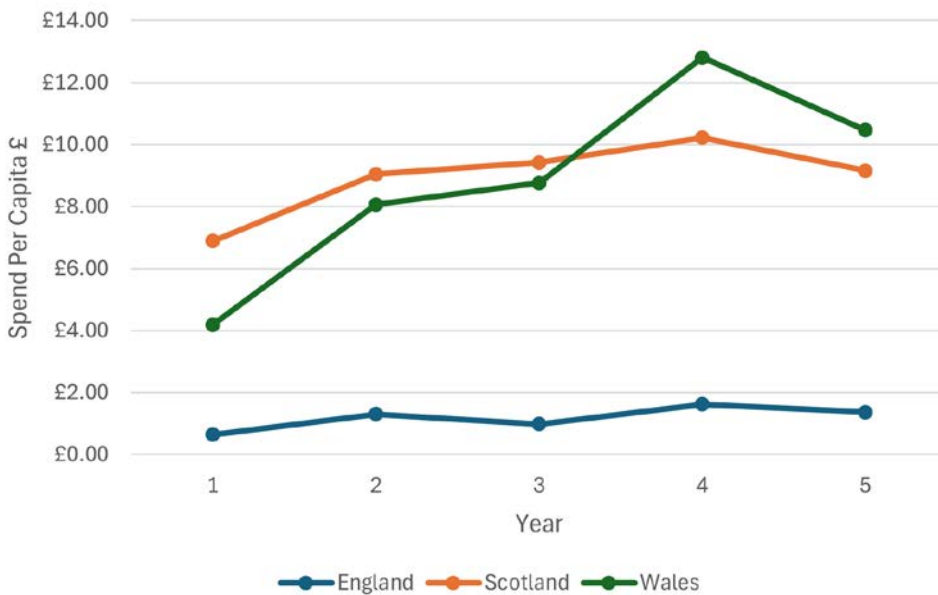


HOME NATIONS

LWA spending in England during the financial year 2023/24 has fallen, both in cumulative terms and in terms of spend per capita. It is important to compare these trends to the devolved nations who have traditionally run centralised, robust schemes that are capable of targeting areas based on level of deprivation and have a larger spend per capita. Due to the urgency with which this report needed to be published we were unable to access Northern Ireland data from the 2023/24 financial year. As a result, this section focuses on England in comparison to Scotland and Wales.

Spend Per Capita

Figure 8 - Spend Per Capita across the Home Nations



In England we saw a decrease in spend per capita from £1.62 in 2022/23 to £1.37 in 2023/24, this is a trend which has also continued across the devolved nations with Wales seeing a reduction in spend per capita from £12.81 to £10.47 and Scotland's spend per capita falling from £10.22 to £9.16.

However, figure 8 still makes it clear that the levels of provision available across the devolved nations far supersedes that in England. If England wished to have a spend per capita on par with the Welsh Discretionary Assistance Fund then their yearly spend on LWA would need to be over £600 million, 663% larger than current LWA spend. It must be emphasised that England's significantly lower spend is not due to differences in the level of need, this is a direct result of funding restrictions for local authorities.

As poverty and deprivation levels across the UK show, England has the highest levels of poverty and so it is likely that there is a higher need in England compared to the devolved nations. England has a poverty rate of 22%, on par with Wales, but 1% higher than Scotland and 6% higher than Northern Ireland²⁸. This shows how the level of provision available in England is drastically lacking, meaning the 57.7 million people in England have access to a lesser quality of support than their neighbours in less poverty-stricken countries.

Figure 9 - Average English LWA SPC in each deprivation decile

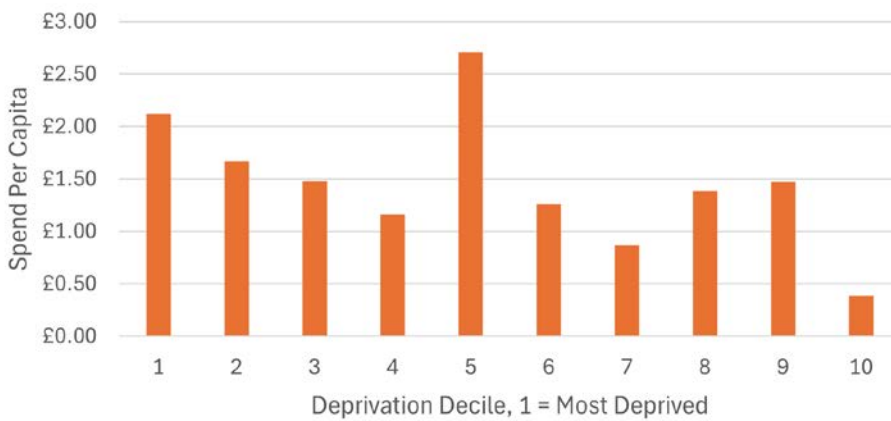


Figure 9 shows the LWA spend per capita across deprivation deciles in English authorities. This graph portrays a clear issue, there is little correlation between levels of deprivation within an authority and the amount spent per person on Local Welfare Assistance. This is seen as the fifth decile, containing authorities with an average level of deprivation, has the highest per capita spend, 22% larger than the spend in the most deprived decile. Additionally, the second least deprived areas of the country have an average per capita spend on a similar level to the third most deprived areas.

In England, it is entirely possible that a deprived local authority could have a limited or non-existent LWA scheme but a neighbouring, more affluent local authority, could have a robust, well-funded scheme. It means that there are consistently over 14 million people across England living in a 'crisis support' desert, some of them in areas of heavy income deprivation, in this postcode lottery of support.

England in Context

Within England, Local Welfare Assistance is at the discretion of each authority. This is particularly worrying in the most deprived local authorities as central government budget cuts have disproportionately impacted the least well-off geographical areas²⁹.

Figure 10 - Welsh Discretionary Assistance Fund Spend Per Capita by local authority deprivation quintile

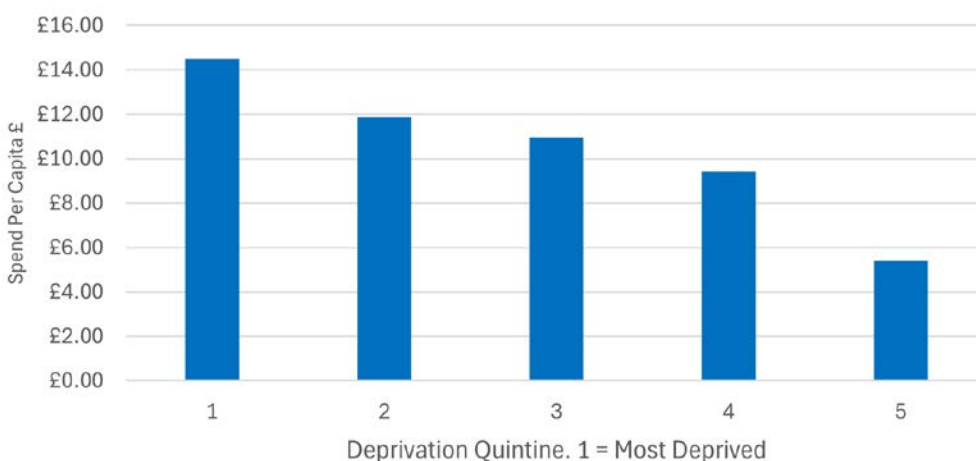


Figure 10 show the spend of the Welsh Discretionary Assistance Fund split across different deprivation quintiles. This shows a correlation between levels of deprivation and the spend per capita in each authority displaying the advantages of a centrally run, well-funded schemes. This data was accessed through an FOI request to the Welsh government³⁰ as well as the Welsh Indices of Deprivation^{31,32}.

Figure 11 - Scottish Welfare Fund Spend Per Capita by local authority deprivation decile

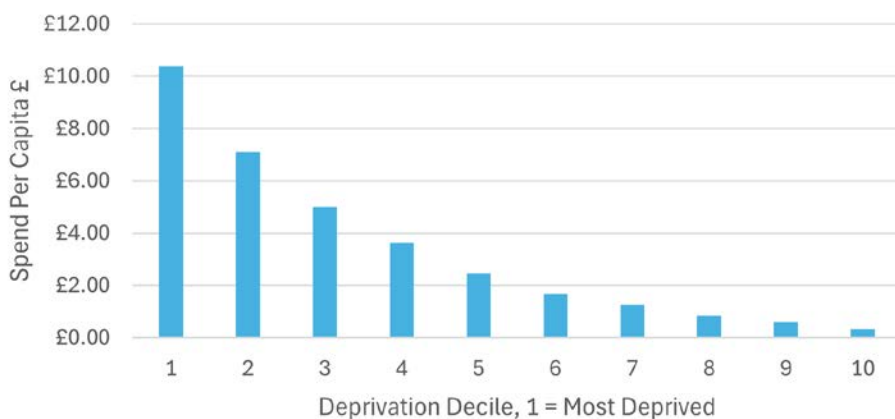


Figure 11 shows that the Scottish Welfare Fund is extremely efficient at distributing funds and targeting crisis support in the most deprived areas, with a clear correlation between spend per capita and deprivation levels. It is important to note that unlike England and Wales, the Scottish Welfare Fund is a statutory service. This data was accessed through the Scottish Welfare Fund statistics release in 2024³³.

Applications and Awards in 2023/24

Crisis support schemes across the UK must manage a trade-off between fewer, higher-value, awards or more, lower value, awards. A lower average award value will increase the number of individuals able to be helped but will lessen the impact on the lives of each individual recipient. Additionally, it is also about ensuring allotted budgets for the financial year can stretch and will not result in those who may be in dire need unable to access support.

Figure 12 - Applications and Awards in the UK nations 2023/24

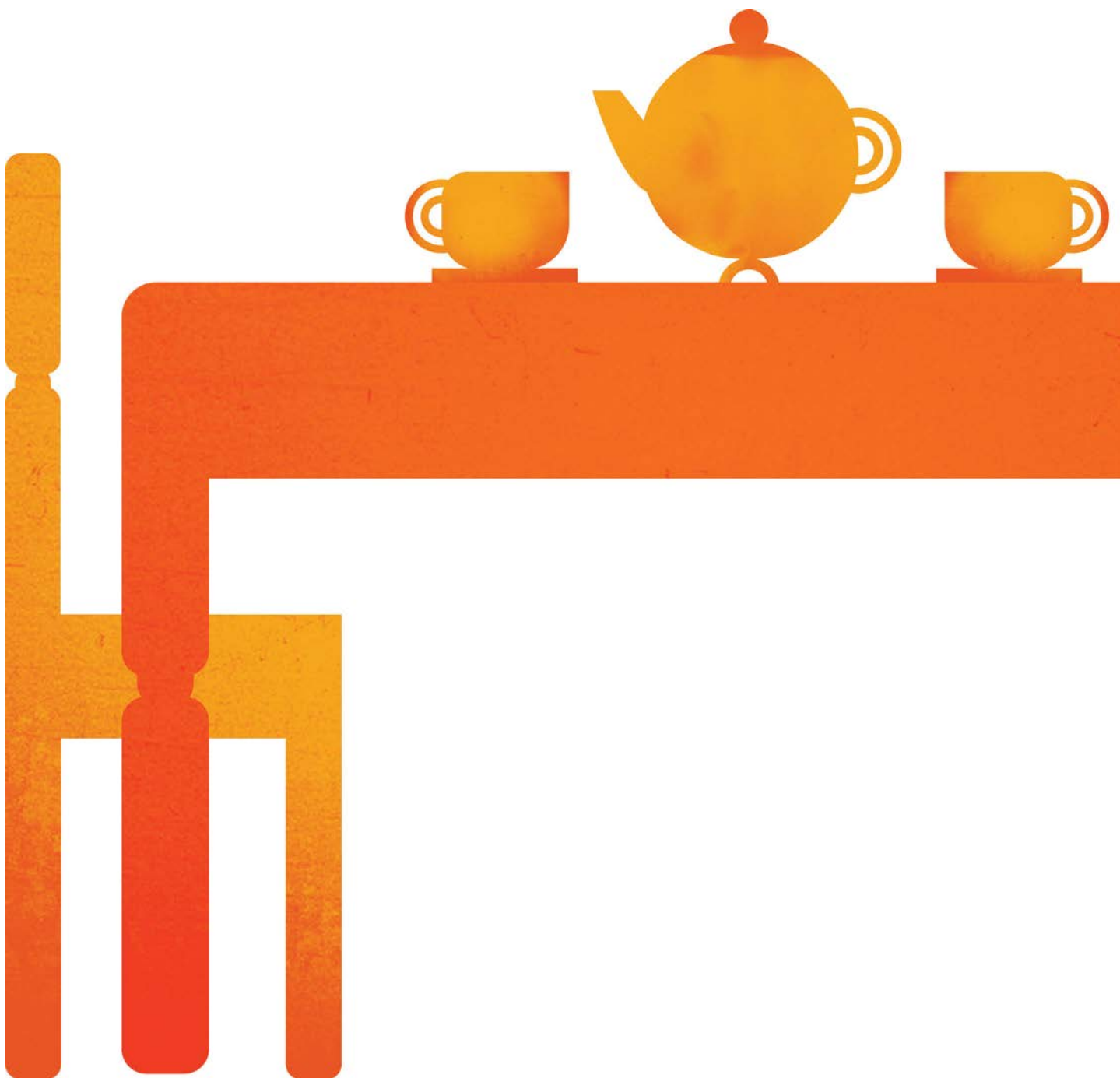
	Population	Total Apps	Total Awards	%Successful	Average Award Value
England	57.7m	618,832	468,497	76%	£169
Scotland	5.4m	259,355	160,595	62%	£311
Wales	3.1m	372,024	243,097	65%	£136

Figure 12 compares the Home Nations, (with the exception of Northern Ireland), application numbers, the success rate of applicants, and the average award value. This highlights some of the differences, for example Wales prioritise more, low value awards while Scotland focuses on fewer, large value awards.

England has a higher success rate of applicants, but the total number of awards given is less than three times that of Scotland and less than double of Wales, despite having a population 10 times that of Scotland and 18 times that of Wales. In England, this means that there is one award given for every 123 people, compared to one award for every 37 people in Scotland and one award for every 13 people in Wales.

In England, the value of average awards has continued to fall year on year. In 2021/22 average awards stood at £229 which fell to £220 in 2022/23 and now sit at £169 in 2023/24 – a real terms decrease of 33% between 2021/22 and 2023/24.

Awards from the Scottish Welfare Fund have an average value of £311, far larger than schemes in England and Wales although it does provide fewer overall awards. Having such a large average award value means they are able to provide more expensive items, such as furniture and appliances.



HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24

The importance of the Household Support Fund cannot be overestimated, (although this is largely due to the budget size rather than because it was well-designed).

Although HSF has had a tremendously positive impact on LWA, it is not ring-fenced funding specifically for LWA and, in 2023/24, EFP data found that only 4% of HSF was spent on LWA schemes. This is because the vast majority of HSF funding is allocated to targeted grants, vouchers for families eligible for free school meals during school holidays, and, to a lesser extent, direct applications to HSF itself. The use of targeted grants comes with significant flaws as they are often over-relied upon due to the speed and efficiency with which they can be administered (see figures 13-15), something important when funds must be spent within a short period of time.

Data

Local authorities are required to track their HSF spending through a management information, (MI), return that is submitted to the DWP. This information is published online. However, as we wanted to publish this report before HSF ends, we submitted our FOI prior to the MI return deadline, so we did not have access to all returns. We did ask local authorities to provide us with their MI return, but this request was denied by a number of authorities. Instead, we relied upon our FOI request in which we asked for a breakdown of HSF spend across the following categories:

- Targeted Grants
- Free School Meal Holiday Vouchers
- Direct applications to the scheme
- Local Welfare Assistance Scheme
- Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
- Advice Services
- Other (please clarify)

As we were told by a local authority, the short notice of HSF “can significantly inhibit the planning and delivery” giving “insufficient time to thoroughly evaluate and allocate resources effectively”. “This can lead to rushed decisions, potentially impacting the quality and reach of services” and “places a strain on the ability to plan long-term and deliver consistent support to those in need”³⁴.

How is HSF Spent?

Figure 13 - Tranche Two

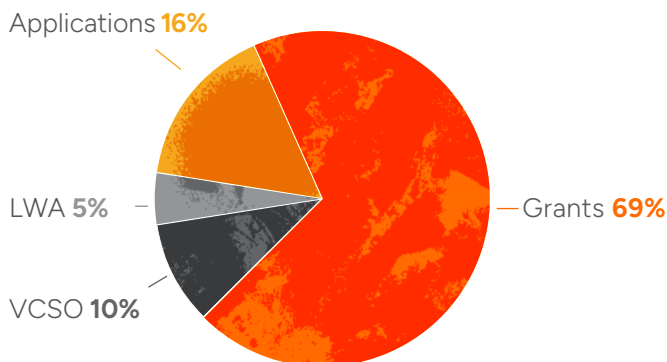


Figure 14 - Tranche Three

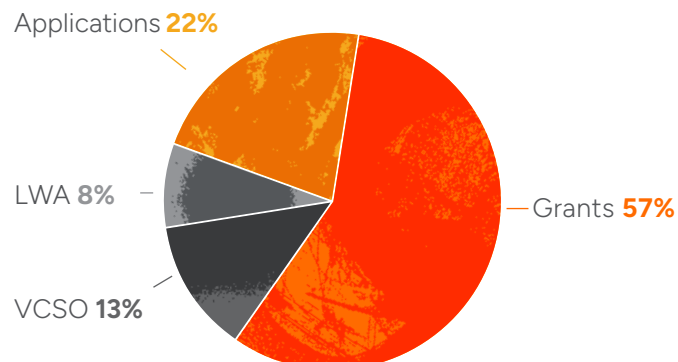


Figure 15 - Annual Stats - HSF Tranche Two and Three

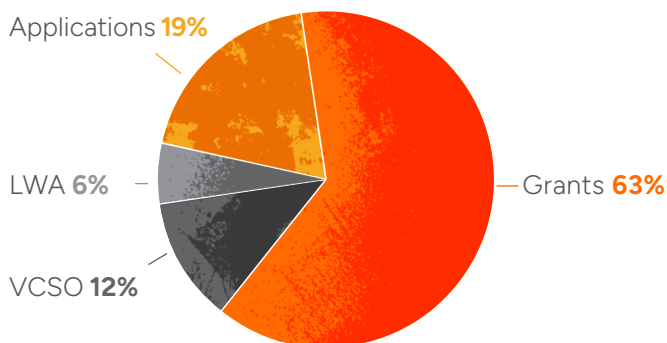
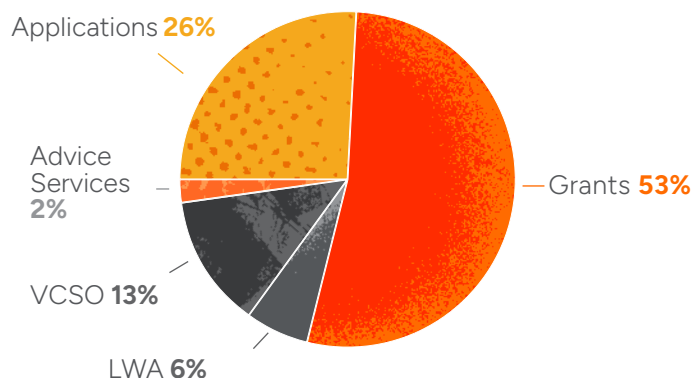


Figure 16 - HSF Tranche Four



Figures 13, 14 and 16 show how HSF allocations were spent during tranches two, three and four, which shows how there have been slight changes. As HSF tranches two and three were only six months in length, figure 15 has also been created to combine these tranches to create annual stats for the whole 2022/23 financial year. For HSF tranche four the DWP guidance allowed, for the first time, local authorities to spend part of the fund on advice services^{35,36}. This only equates to 2% of the overall fund in 2023/24 and thus does not comprise a significant portion of total spending.

Targeted grants continue to dominate, although slowly decline

Tranche four of HSF has continued the trend whereby targeted grants form the majority of overall HSF spend (by targeted grants we mean any direct grants/proactive support given to households that did not require an application, usually focused on people receiving particular benefits). But this number is now in decline, with a total of a 16% drop between tranche two and tranche four. If you combine tranches two and three to create annual stats for HSF spend (seen in figure 15), there has been a 10% drop in the amount of HSF being spent on targeted grants between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

There is a stigma which exists for many around accessing crisis support or applying for financial support during difficult times. For this, the amount of HSF spent on targeted grants has been beneficial as it has allowed local authorities to provide support to individuals who may have been hesitant about applying. Additionally, by being targeted it has meant that funds have been distributed to individuals and families who may otherwise not have known that funds were available.

Despite having its advantages, the use of targeted grants comes with concerns. EFP believe that the use of targeted grants is being continually over-relied upon due to the speed by which it can be administered. Ease and quickness are important for local authorities as HSF allocations must be spent by its tranche deadline otherwise it is clawed back by central government. As a result, targeted grants can be used partly out of convenience, rather than because of their effectiveness, and this reduces the extent to which HSF funds can be spent effectively to have a long-lasting impact on the poorest and most at-risk individuals and families across England. There needs to be a balance between direct grants and funds available for people to apply for support.

Free School Meals Holiday Vouchers – An Uncertain Future

Vouchers for families eligible for free school meals, (FSM), to cover holiday periods form a huge proportion of total HSF spend. For tranches two and three, the annual amount of HSF spent on free school meals totalled 39% of the entire fund. This has now risen to 44% of tranche four and makes FSM holiday vouchers the largest expenditure from HSF budgets by a considerable margin.

Providing free school meals is essential, however, this should not be the remit of a crisis support fund – this should be the responsibility of the Department for Education to continue their usual free school meal distribution outside of term time until the necessary reform of the welfare state occurs.

Providing FSM vouchers through HSF effectively reduces the amount of money available to be spent on genuine crisis support by 44%. Local authorities cannot deliver the most impactful possible policies when such a large proportion of their funds are needed to support families with FSM holiday vouchers. Within our FOI request for tranche four of the Household Support Fund, we asked local authorities whether they plan on continuing with FSM holiday vouchers if HSF is not extended. Our figures show that 22 local authorities will not continue with FSM holiday vouchers post-September 30th, while a further 20 don't know/aren't decided about future funding, and those who do plan to continue schemes, will have to drastically reallocate funds to continue with much-needed FSM holiday vouchers.

The alternative to providing vouchers is that children will go hungry until the welfare state is able to adequately cover need. This will have endless negative repercussions on wider public services. It will reduce education opportunities and the ability of the poorest children to reach their potential.

The Future of Crisis Support

The nature of HSF has fostered an environment whereby the notion of reactionary, sticking plaster support, has become the norm in crisis support. If we wish to get the most out of central government funding, then local authorities need to be able to plan. Local authorities are best placed to understand local needs and thus they need to be able to formulate and implement policy ideas which can have the greatest possible impact on people's lives.

"If we had combined HSF funds over the period since October 2021, we could have had more long-term planning to strategically help more vulnerable residents. (...) This is no way to administer public funds."³⁷ – Lewisham Council

Figure 17 - All HSF tranches, the date of the announcement and start/end dates

Tranche	Announced	Start date	End date
One	30th September '21	6th October '21	31st March '22
Two	23rd March '22	1st April '22	30th September '22
Three	26th May '22	1st October '22	31st March '23
Four	17th November '22	1st April '23	31st March '24
Five	6th March '24	1st April '24	30th September '24

Additionally, the often short notice of HSF extensions, (figure 17), has meant that, between each tranche, many local authorities are forced to close their application routes and reopen them weeks later whilst spending decisions are being processed. This creates an extended period of time where the most financially vulnerable members of society are unable to access crisis support from their local authority, a problem heightened further by a lack of core-funded Local Welfare Assistance schemes. There are also instances where staff have been laid off or redeployed due to their authority not having forewarning of an HSF extension, meaning vital experience is lost from teams.

"This (short notice of funding) has substantially impacted our planning and delivery, with guidance and grant determinations for HSF5 only issued days before the commencement of the new grant period on 1st April 2024. Delivery will be delayed accordingly, and an application-based process will only be able to resume from June 2024."³⁸

- Leicester City Council

A consistent positive of the Household Support Fund is the way it has allowed local authorities to spend their allocation in a myriad of different ways, whether that be; targeted grants, direct applications, LWA schemes, VCSOs and, as of 2023/24, advice services. This scope of options allows for local authorities to distribute funds to best suit local needs. Additionally, the increase in the percentage of the HSF allocation that is being spent on direct applications should be viewed as a positive. It is expanding the total funds available to those going through a crisis and does not limit support to those who are already on pre-existing benefits.

The use of VCSOs is, and has been, an incredibly important aspect of HSF funds so far and it is important that this partnership approach is not lost. VCSOs are often provided money from local authorities HSF allocations to assist with the delivery of their services. This allows authorities to delegate certain aspects of support to these specialist agencies and charities to deliver catered support in their area of expertise.

The future of crisis support should embrace cross-sector collaboration so that crisis support can be more productive whilst allowing for the maximisation of access, avoiding duplication of support, and allowing for cross-referencing between support pathways.

WHAT DO LOCAL AUTHORITIES THINK?

Does short notice of funding inhibit the planning and delivery of HSF³⁹?

"It is extremely problematic... short-term nature of the funding fails to support more strategic approaches which would more likely support longer term outcomes"

"difficult to think strategically about ways in which provision could be targeted to provide longer term, sustainable outcomes"

"if we had combined HSF funds over the period since October 2021 we could have had more long-term planning to strategically help more"

"A key focus for the Council in the coming year will be to step away from reactive and crisis support to develop proactive solutions which are more"

"Specific cohorts of residents have become dependent on the HSF funding"

"It was very difficult to plan and have a sustainable solution."

"limited our ability to plan and deliver many new initiatives using HSF that would be more focused on prevention and mitigating the end of HSF"

"Our residents do not know whether they will continue to receive much needed support, causing additional stress"

"there is a focus on short-term relief as opposed to long-term solutions."

"This is no way to administer public funds."

"We would like to deliver a more proactive LWP to prevent hardship / crisis but the current demand levels in HSF and the uncertainty around the future may make this difficult."

"if HSF had offered longer-term certainty of funding from the start it would have allowed for much more sustainable initiatives to be put in place"

"It creates restrictions and means it is not possible to hold the back budget for autumn and winter when financial hardships are worsened"

"Short-term funding doesn't allow enough time to develop new or sustainable initiatives"

"insufficient time to thoroughly evaluate and allocate resources effectively... lead to rushed decisions, potentially impacting the quality and reach of services... strain on the ability to plan long-term and deliver consistent support to those in need"

"makes it very difficult to make meaningful changes... strategic planning around funding can't be done."

"not always possible to put in place schemes that would have longer lasting benefits"

"reduced the ability of the council to be more proactive at tackling the source of problems"

"It's incredibly challenging"

"It makes it difficult to plan anything new"

"limits our ability to have meaningful conversations across the council and with partner organisations about how best to deliver any HSF programme"

"Councils need certainty and consistent funding to efficiently maintain the staff, services and networks that help our most vulnerable residents."

FURNITURE PROVISION IN ENGLAND

There is significant disparity between local authorities in England as to whether furniture and appliances are provided at all, and then which items are offered. In contrast, all essential furniture and appliances, including flooring, are accessible in Scotland through the statutory Scottish Welfare Fund, and all bar flooring are available in Wales through the Discretionary Assistance Fund (EFP's list of essential furniture items can be found in the appendix). Our previous report, 'On the Cliff Edge'⁴⁰ examined in detail the different levels of furniture provision across England.

Furniture and Appliance spend in England

Only 1% of HSF, £10 million, was reported to have been spent directly on the provision of furniture, compared with 2.31% in 2022/23. But there are issues when collating this data as many local authorities do not measure furniture spend as it was not a requirement of the MI return for HSF tranches. Numerous authorities place furniture spend into either a 'wider essentials' or 'tangible goods' section which makes it difficult to ascertain the true figure. As a result, it is likely that more than £10 million of HSF was spent on furniture in 2023/24, but not significantly more. The main source of provision for furniture and white goods came, and continues to come, from Local Welfare Assistance schemes.

In terms of spending on Local Welfare Assistance, we saw that 37% of all LWA budgets were spent on the provision of furniture and appliances in 2023/24, with this spending coming in the form of either cash, vouchers or the provision of the item itself. 37% is broadly similar to 2022/23 (where 36% was spent on furniture), but as has been made clear throughout the report, the total spend on LWA between 2022/23 and 2023/24 fell by over £11 million. This means that despite a similar percentage of LWA budgets continuing to be spent on furniture provision, there has been a real spend decrease of £3.2 million.

Based on our research, proposed budgets for LWA in 2024/25 stand at just over £48 million, a £31 million reduction on 2023/24 (equating to 39% of overall spend), meaning that budgets for 2024/25 will be only half of what they were in 2022/23 without urgent government intervention.

Furniture Deserts

A furniture desert is an area of the country where there is zero provision from local or central government that provides support for furniture and white goods. These only exist in England as the centralised nature of schemes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ensure furniture provision is available across their countries.

There are currently 36 English local authorities that do not provide LWA of any kind and two authorities with LWA schemes that do not provide furniture or white goods. As a result, there are 14.7 million people who live in an area where they are unable to get help with furniture and appliances when in a financially precarious position.

Local Authority Furniture Spend Per Capita

Providing support for furniture and appliances is not specifically within the guidance of HSF tranche four, meaning it is purely at the discretion of each local authority whether they choose to provide furniture and appliances from this budget – ‘The Fund can be used to support wider essential needs not linked to energy, water or food should Authorities consider this appropriate in their area’⁴¹.

Typically, within the scope of local crisis support provision, support for furniture and white goods comes from Local Welfare Assistance schemes but as of 2023/24, these have become so closely intertwined that a reduction in HSF would significantly impact on levels of support available through LWA. As things stand, we have confirmation that at least 106 local authorities provide financial support for furniture and appliances with 36 local authorities having no coverage, 23% of all authorities. This means there are 14.7 million people in the UK unable to get support with furniture and appliances.

As millions of people are living in furniture poverty, we believe that furniture provision should become a key tenet of either HSF or whichever form of crisis support replaces it, to ensure that this widespread issue is being thoroughly addressed. Also, for similar reasons, LWA should become a statutory service provided by all local authorities.

Figure 18 - LWA per capita spend in 2023/24 on furniture across different brackets (operational schemes only)

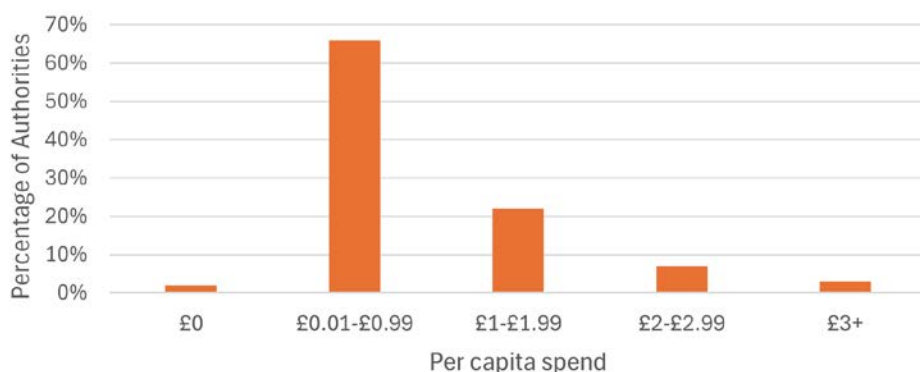
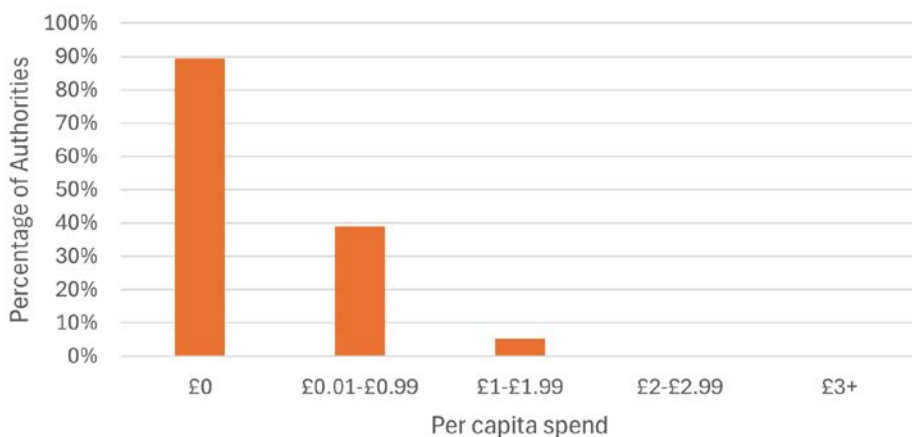


Figure 19 - Local authority HSF per capita spend on furniture in 2023/24 across different brackets



As is evident from figures 18 and 19, the majority of LWA furniture spend per capita falls within the £0 - £0.99 category and, for HSF, the majority of local authorities are spending nothing on furniture. However, it is important to reiterate that HSF furniture spend information is flawed as many local authorities either did not properly track this information or may have placed funds specifically in an LWA scheme in order to provide furniture.

1.7% of local authorities' LWA schemes do not provide furniture and white goods through their LWA scheme, this contrasts with 86% of local authorities' HSF allocations where £0 is being spent on furniture and white goods.

32% of local authorities are spending more than £1 per capita on furniture and appliances through their LWA scheme, which is positive. However, in comparison to last year, there were 55% of authorities spending over £1 per capita, a decline of 23%. This has occurred as an increasing number of local authorities are feeling financially strained and, due to rising poverty levels, an increased proportion of HSF had to be directed to other spending streams such as Free School Meals vouchers.

Local Welfare Assistance has consistently been a lifeline for individuals and families who have found themselves in a crisis, unable to afford the essential furniture and appliances that they do not own or have been damaged beyond repair/have broken. To guarantee that the provision of Local Welfare Assistance is adequate it is important that 40% of funds are ring-fenced for furniture and white goods, around the level of LWA furniture spend in authorities with existing schemes, to provide an adequate level of support.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



CONCLUSION

As has been made clear throughout this report, crisis support is a vital aspect of the social security system in the UK. Now more than ever, vulnerable individuals and families find themselves in dire need of support. The prospect of coping with unexpected costs or attempting to purchase expensive items like furniture and white goods is financially implausible for many of society's poorest. That is why central government and local authorities must work together to ensure that crisis support, through Local Welfare Assistance schemes or other crisis support funds like HSF, is consistently readily available in the years to come.

We acknowledge that there must be a larger reform of the welfare state to ensure that it provides an adequate level of support for individuals and families. But, even if such reform takes place, there will always be the need for a crisis support system that is able to provide additional funds for those incurring a sudden, unaffordable cost.

Due to the economic turbulence of recent years and numerous policy decisions over the past decade, we have seen an ever-increasing number of people in need of support. Crisis support is not something that is exclusively required by those reliant on the welfare system, working families have also been dragged into evermore financially insecure situations. Because of this, we simply cannot afford to allow HSF to be removed from the landscape of crisis support until the whole welfare system is reformed. Without this additional funding, the landscape of support for vulnerable individuals and families will be decimated and will vanish in many areas.

HSF Positives

HSF has been an extremely valuable addition to crisis support, mainly due to the size of its budget. Local authorities have been able to use this fund to support those within their communities with cash awards, and support for food, fuel and wider essentials. Without this additional money during a time of such uncertainty, millions would have been pushed further toward the precipice of disaster. If HSF ends, with no long-term strategy set to replace it, it will instantly plunge millions more into financial turmoil. The effects of poverty, deprivation, and even malnutrition will be exacerbated and the additional costs to public services will be huge.

Even though EFP does not believe it should be the purpose of a crisis support fund, we must still acknowledge the importance of HSF funding in allowing local authorities to provide free school meal vouchers outside of term time until such time as Universal Credit provides sufficient income. As our research has shown, 27% of local authorities say they will either not continue with free school meal vouchers or do not know/aren't decided how they will fund them if HSF is not extended beyond September 30th. If HSF is not extended millions of children will go hungry. Joseph Rowntree's research showed that 35% of children arrive at school hungry each day⁴², this deep poverty is very real, and a removal of the Household Support Fund will only compound these issues further.

HSF Issues

Although HSF has some tremendous benefits and it is crucial that it is extended, there remain key issues which must be addressed to create a more sustainable, long-term solution for crisis support.

Firstly, HSF has acted as a sticking plaster for what is a persistent and systemic issue for local government finance and crisis support more specifically. Having a source of funding that has consistently been short-term, only being extended in 6-month or year-long tranches, and announced at the last minute, has prevented local authorities from having the ability to correctly plan the dissemination and advertisement of funds.

We examined every English local authority website on May 1st, 2024, a month after the start of tranche five, to see if plans and application routes for this tranche had been announced, and 99 local authorities did not have a published plan for HSF or just had a holding statement saying this was in progress. As a result, local people were left without the ability to access support for at least a month of the six months of tranche five.

Secondly, due to HSF being delivered in short tranches with specific time restrictions on when funds can be spent, local authorities have been incapable of planning their spend in the most effective manner. On numerous occasions local authorities have told EFP that the nature of its announcements and restrictions on spend have meant they were unable to take innovative action that could have a preventative impact on the need for crisis support in their communities. Instead, what has happened time and time again, is that local authorities have been forced to act in a reactionary way, spending HSF funds to alleviate the immediate plight of people but without a long-term effect on the number of people facing financial hardship. This creates a cycle of poverty where both local authorities and the poorest individuals and families become reliant on HSF to support them in the short-term.

Whatever the specific policy may be, it is evident that what local authorities both want and need is a long-term funding strategy that can allow them to strategically plan their crisis support provision for the years ahead. This can allow local authorities to make informed decisions about how to tackle deprivation within their communities, attacking the problem at its root cause rather than being forced into a position of being forever reactionary.

We are working with a group of charities to undertake a review of LWA, led by The Children's Society, speaking to local authorities and the VCSO sector to understand and evaluate how existing crisis support schemes are functioning and to use this to propose a sustainable vision for the future to support those in their time of greatest need⁴³. We look forward to sharing this with the government to feed into their own urgently needed review.

Thirdly, when providing funds for crisis support to local authorities there must be elements which are ring-fenced so that key areas of provision are targeted. This has been a specific and consistent failure of HSF to date as key areas such as the provision of furniture and white goods, a vital part of crisis support, have not been a specific target of HSF; thus, the majority of local authorities have not provided these essential items.

Fourthly, the Household Support Fund has created a reliance by local authorities. This is evident in the fact that Local Welfare Assistance budgets have, over the years, become increasingly made up of HSF funding. As our research has found, 15 local authorities used exclusively HSF funding for their LWA scheme in 2023/24, and an additional two used over 99%. This creates a dangerous position should HSF end because eight authorities will close their scheme, with an additional 16 authorities reducing their spending by an average of 46.3%. It is crucial that LWA provision becomes a statutory service that all authorities provide.

Not only this, but the impact on the VCSO sector will be similarly immense as they are reliant on local authority funds (often allocated from HSF) to provide vital goods and services to people in their local area. At EFP we spoke to frontline workers across England who said that they are already on the precipice of disaster. One caseworker stated that it will no longer be financially viable to provide food parcels or basic essentials to people unless their charity continues to receive local authority support⁴⁴.

Finally, HSF cannot be the single solution to an issue which is a systemic problem within the welfare system. Social security has been under attack for most of the past 15 years and regressive policy decisions such as the introduction of a two-child cap on the receipt of child benefit, a freezing of benefits (between 2016 and 2020), and the removal of the £20 uplift in Universal Credit has fostered an environment in which insecurity has become the norm for millions of people.

We have to ensure that the basis of the social safety net is robust and can provide people with the financial resources to acquire the basic essentials for themselves and their families. Then, and only then, can work be done to reduce levels of need and deprivation in local communities and to reduce the shocking levels of poverty which exist across the country.

Currently, over six million people in the UK are living in furniture poverty, lacking the furniture and white goods that are essential to live a fully functional and fulfilling life, such as a cooker, a fridge, window coverings, a bed etc. Crisis support, such as the Household Support Fund and Local Welfare Assistance, are often the only sources of support for people who find themselves in a position of furniture poverty. If HSF ends there will be 17.8 million people in England without access to LWA crisis support and 6.35 million people living in an area with greatly diminished levels of crisis support.

A basic cooker costs around £250, plus delivery and installation costs, and many families simply do not have the funds to replace one when it breaks. It cannot be acceptable for the lack of furniture and white goods, or deep furniture poverty, to become the norm. In any future crisis support funding there must be a proportion ring-fenced specifically to tackle the ever-growing issue of furniture poverty, which will also serve to equalise support across local authorities, ending the postcode lottery of support which currently exists.

Additionally, when allowing for the provision of furniture items there is also scope for local authorities to look at preloved options which can be more cost-effective with the added benefit that it can have a positive environmental impact.

In addition to ring-fenced funding, we need a new funding formula for the allocation of crisis support funding, to better match the provision with levels of deprivation and to ensure it is adequate to meet need in future years. In the devolved nations, where they have maintained centrally controlled schemes since the removal of DSF in 2013, we have consistently seen that the areas with the highest levels of deprivation and need receive the largest amount of support. This has not been the case in England. As EFP research has shown, there is a large discrepancy between the allocation of HSF funds and the local authorities with the most impoverished residents. As a result, there is a situation where some local authorities are incapable of meeting the demand for need in their community whilst other local authorities have significantly more funding than their deprivation levels would require.

Whatever form the new funding formula should take, we believe the minimum allocation of funding for Local Welfare Assistance should be £600 million per annum. This brings the spend in line with the schemes in Scotland and Wales, creating vital parity of support across the UK. We believe that this should be considered a reasonable and realistic minimum threshold.

There are steps that local authorities can take now which can significantly reduce the need for crisis support for some residents. There needs to be increased access to furnished tenancies within the social housing sector, and this includes local authority council housing. Currently, only 2% of social housing is let as furnished compared to 29% in the private rented sector. End Furniture Poverty's ['Make a House a Home'](#) campaign is lobbying for this number to be increased to 10%.



RECOMMENDATIONS

One local authority told us that the way HSF has been managed was: “no way to administer public funds”⁴⁵. We agree. The current method of last-minute extensions and short-term funding for local authorities hinders the delivery of effective policy.

That is why we are providing the following recommendations to ensure that, in the future, the government and local authorities can administer their funds in a way which best supports those experiencing a crisis.

Government

Rather than utilising the existing, albeit patchy, structure of Local Welfare Assistance to deliver extra support during the cost of living crisis, the government chose to create a new fund, the Household Support Fund. We believe the government should simply adequately fund LWA, make it a statutory service, and provide robust guidance.

We need a review of LWA to develop a crisis support system fit to meet the current and future levels of demand and we believe this should be based upon the following principles.

- **A nationwide approach** – crisis support is a vital lifeline for the most vulnerable individuals and families across the country and everyone should be able to access adequate support, wherever they live. There is clearly a need for a wider reform within the welfare state, but a well-funded, statutory, crisis support system will always be required for those in dire need.
- **One last extension** – we cannot allow local authorities to fall off the cliff edge on September 30th when HSF is due to end. We need one last extension of HSF while the review is carried out with matching the current budget of £1bn per annum, pro rata if needed.
- **Sufficient funding** – funding must be sufficient to meet demand. We need a new funding formula for LWA which should consider the poverty and deprivation levels of local communities and ensure that budgets match need. Any new funding formula should take into account the quality of support available in Scotland and Wales, to create parity across the Home Nations. This would mean an annual budget in England of around £600 million, as a minimum.
- **Ring-fenced funding for furniture and appliances** – every local authority should provide the full range of essential furniture items and at least 40% of their LWA funding should be ring-fenced for this, to match the current furniture spend of existing schemes which demonstrates the amount required.
- **A simplified application process with multiple access routes** – crisis support funding should be available via multiple application routes (online, phone, in person), in a simple process, and whilst being made as visible as possible both locally and nationally.

-
- **Data collection to measure impact** – we should not have to issue FOI requests every year to find out the state of crisis support. Local authorities should be required to complete simple annual data collection forms so the impact of crisis support can be clearly measured with lessons learnt for future improvements.
 - **Guarantee our Essentials** – benefit payments must be increased to a level which allows individuals and families to afford the basics; food, housing, clothing and the ability to keep warm and clean. This would lift millions out of poverty, improve living standards, and increase the ability of children from the poorest communities to succeed in education, all whilst reducing the pressure placed on crisis support services like LWA and HSF.
 - **Working Together** – the government should strive to create a system that thrives on cross-sector collaboration, between local authorities, VCOS, social landlords and more, so that crisis support can be more productive whilst allowing for the maximisation of access, avoiding duplication of support, and allowing for cross-referencing between support pathways.

Local Authorities

Despite the funding uncertainty, it is important that local authorities take steps now to ensure their residents are thoroughly supported through crisis.

- Local authorities must continue, or open, a scheme that is able to provide residents facing a crisis with support such as cash, food and fuel vouchers, as well as all the essential furniture and appliances items they may require. This fund should be robust enough to adequately address levels of need within their local area.
- All schemes must be sufficiently advertised locally to ensure there is maximum engagement from those in need.
- The application process for an LWA scheme needs to be robust, but it should also be simple, easily understandable, and applications quickly processed to minimise further undue stress to users.
- The provision of furniture and appliances should focus on the delivery of 'items' rather than 'cash' or 'vouchers'⁴⁶. Those experiencing furniture poverty are often also dealing with issues such as food poverty and unaffordable bills which can lead to cash for furniture being diverted. This also avoids unforeseen delivery and installation charges for applicants. We support the Cash First approach for other types of support.



APPENDIX



METHODOLOGY

We sent two FOIs to every local authority; the first regarding LWA and the second about HSF.

The majority of local authorities were able to provide us with a response to both FOIs in a timely manner and at the time of writing we have received 93.5% of responses for our LWA FOI and 93.5% of responses from our HSF FOI. This provided a good sample for our research to ensure our claims and arguments are robust throughout. Unfortunately, a small number of authorities did not answer our HSF FOI on the grounds that it was not information that should be readily accessible to the public, despite them responding in previous years. We do not believe this is a significant trend, however it did certainly seem a more prevalent issue than in prior years.

Where a local authority did not provide an FOI response, we underwent a thorough examination of their website to gather any relevant information which it may contain about crisis support.

Not all local authorities chose to measure the number of HSF applications received, instead only measuring successful applicants as this is all that is required on a Department for Work and Pensions, (DWP), Management Information, (MI), return.

Similarly, in our FOI request, we asked for the amount spent on 'In-Kind Furniture Support' and 'In Kind Support for other services'. This proved problematic as most local authorities did not measure their spend in this way, instead only looking at spending through the more ubiquitous and all-encompassing terms of 'tangible goods' and 'wider essentials' which could include furniture but that is not always the case. This issue stems again from the DWP MI Return, as they do not ask for a more specific explanation as to how funds are being spent, many local authorities do not retain or measure this information. This made it particularly difficult to make any substantive claims about the amount of HSF being spent on in-kind furniture support however we were able to deduce some information from it.

The measuring of HSF spend could certainly be more comprehensive and if the DWP required a more detailed breakdown of spend it could be more useful for identifying schemes with best practice and understanding more thoroughly where this money is actually being spent. It has been made apparent through the response to our LWA FOI that local authorities are more than capable of measuring data at a more micro level; so, the DWP should begin requiring more in-depth explanations of spending as it can only increase the ability of central government to understand precisely where funds are going and how these trends have shifted over time.

We also asked a series of questions in the HSF FOI, such as

- 'To what extent does the short notice of the availability of funding inhibit the planning and delivery activity of HSF (e.g. internal finance and policy decision-making, resource requirements, engagement with internal departments and external partners)?',
- 'Did you take on additional staff for HSF four and if so are these staff likely to be retained for HSF 5? '
- 'When HSF five ends, what do you expect the impact to be on: Resources, Local Welfare Provision scheme, External partner agencies, Communities'.

Some local authorities did not answer some or all of these questions on the grounds that it was asking for an opinion which we completely understood, but overall, we received enough responses to be able to conclusively determine a general consensus on these issues.

We also conducted interviews with crisis support workers and those who work in the VCISO sector to get a better understanding of the importance of HSF on their charities and, more importantly, on the people they help. These interviews were semi-structured in nature and allowed for the exploration of interesting points brought up during the discussion. These interviews were particularly valuable in gaining an understanding of how precarious the charity sector is if additional money from local authorities, via HSF, is not continued and the impact this will have on wider communities.

Not only are these charitable organisations worried about a huge increase in demand that will occur without local crisis support being available, but many are worried about their own existence. There are instances of charities in the South East of England telling us that they are already struggling financially and, if not receiving financial backing from an already cash-strapped local authority, they would cease to exist, leaving the people of that particular area without a key source of resources including food and other basic essentials.



KEY TERMS

Furniture Poverty is the inability to afford to buy, maintain, or access, any household furniture or appliance item that is essential to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living.

Deep Furniture Poverty is the lack of three or more of the essential furniture or appliance items that are essential to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living

The essential items of furniture or **'the essential items'** are the items of furniture, appliances and furnishings which you need to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living:



Core Spending Power is a measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant, (RSG).

Core Spend – When we refer to the 'core spend' on LWA we refer to the amount of that fund that comes from core spending power as outlined above, rather than from extra government grants such as the Household Support Fund.

Crisis Support is a collective term that includes Local Welfare Assistance (England), The Scottish Welfare Fund, the Discretionary Assistance Fund (Wales) and Discretionary Support (Northern Ireland). We include the Household Support Fund as a type of crisis support. The guidance for the fifth tranche states: "The objective of The Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with the cost of essentials."

Targeted Grants – By targeted grants, we mean money that is delivered directly to members of the public based on certain criteria, such as eligibility for Free School Meals, without the need for any application process.

MI Return – Management Information Return, this is the document issued by the DWP to local authorities which allows them to track how each tranche of HSF has been spent.

COMMON ACRONYMS

DAF	Discretionary Assistance Fund (Wales)
DS	Discretionary Support (Northern Ireland)
DSF	Discretionary Social Fund
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
DfE	Department For Education
EFP	End Furniture Poverty
FOI	Freedom of Information Request
FSM	Free School Meals
HSF	Household Support Fund
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LWAS	Local Welfare Assistance Scheme
LWA	Local Welfare Assistance, also known as local welfare provision. These are schemes in England only.
SWF	Scottish Welfare Fund
VCSO	Voluntary and Community Sector Organisation
SPC	Spend Per Capita
UC	Universal Credit



SPEND PER CAPITA OF ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH AN LWA SCHEME

Figure 20 - Table showing the SPC of all local authorities with an LWA scheme (including referral only schemes)

Barking and Dagenham	£1.35	East Riding of Yorkshire	£0.42	Stockport	£0.44
Barnet	£1.43	Gloucestershire	£0.78	Stockton-on-Tees	£1.27
Barnsley	£0.97	Greenwich	£2.94	Suffolk	£4.61
Bath and NE Somerset	£0.92	Hackney	£2.70	Sunderland	£1.20
Bedford	£0.55	Halton	£1.22	Surrey	£0.64
Birmingham	£1.02	Hammersmith & Fulham	£3.37	Sutton	£0.62
Blackburn with Darwen	£1.39	Haringey	£1.85	Swindon	£0.17
Blackpool	£2.06	Hartlepool	£1.48	Tameside	£0.77
Bolton	£4.00	Havering	£5.22	Telford and Wrekin	£0.79
Bradford	£0.44	Herefordshire	£0.14	Thurrock	£8.69
Brighton and Hove	£4.83	Hertfordshire	£1.82	Torbay	£0.50
Bristol	£1.83	Hounslow	£0.62	Tower Hamlets	£4.05
Bromley	£0.70	Hull	£7.20	Trafford	£4.53
Bury	£8.29	Islington	£4.68	Wakefield	£0.31
Cambridgeshire	£0.71	Kensington and Chelsea	£2.17	Walsall	£0.83
Central Bedfordshire	£0.11	Kirklees	£11.22	Waltham Forest	£4.22
Cheshire East	£0.66	Knowsley	£1.35	Wandsworth	£0.51
City of London	£0.93	Lambeth	£2.45	Warrington	£0.92
Cornwall	£1.04	Lancashire	£0.40	Warwickshire	£11.88
Coventry	£1.05	Leeds	£2.64	Westminster	£2.69
Darlington	£1.81	Leicester City Council	£0.54	Wigan	£0.26
Derby	£0.07	Lewisham	£0.25	Wiltshire	£0.19
Derbyshire	£3.51	Liverpool	£4.51	Windsor and Maidenhead	£0.08
Doncaster	£3.09	Luton	£0.08	Wokingham	£0.08
Dorset	£0.57	Manchester	£1.78	York	£1.71
Durham	£1.91	Medway	£0.14		
Ealing	£1.97	Merton	£0.40		

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