

Area Board Briefing Note

Service:	Cost of Living
Date prepared:	15 November 2023
Further enquiries to:	Will Oulton
Direct contact:	William.oulton@wiltshire.gov.uk

Cost of Living

With overall inflation stabilising, it is welcome news that some cost pressures for the community have reduced, but with other financial pressures remaining on household budgets, it is anticipated that there will be continuing demand for support and advice as the winter draws in.

The Council is continuing to work with partners to deliver interventions that provide advice and support to our communities, including:

- Wiltshire libraries are continuing as warm spaces and will also play a key role in distributing support (e.g. with Warm Packs or free Sim-cards) and advice (e.g. Providing energy advice or signposting to partners).
- We have contacted community providers to update our [interactive guide](#) to help people find key support to combat fuel and food poverty. In addition, we are creating a page on the directory that gives an interactive advent calendar view of provision/ opportunities over the Christmas period.
- Foodbanks and Community Food Providers are invited to apply for funding to support their work. Applications are welcome from 13th November 2023 – 21st January 2024. Organisations can make one application in this funding round. Further information and the application form is appended to this update.
- We have further developed our approach to delivering Household Support Fund, working with a range of services and partners to financially support a range of programmes and initiatives.
- [Our website](#) and media channels offer a range of online support and sign-posting information on topics including council tax/benefits, energy advice and mental health support.
- A dedicated Wiltshire Wellbeing support line to provide advice and guidance, and officers are working with to improve processes to ensure people are directed to right support.
- We continue to engagement with our communities, through activity such as the Boaters Survey, which has had a terrific response so far, and Community Conversations, to understand need.

The DWP will be issuing the second Cost of Living Payment of £300 to those in receipt of Universal Credit, Jobseekers allowance, Employment support allowance, Income support and Pension Credit between 31st October and 19th November 2023.¹

The Council is pleased to say that, following a successful summer programme that saw more than 1,220 young people take part, Wiltshire Council's Holiday Activity and Food programme (FUEL) will be back during the Christmas school holidays. It is funded by the Department for Education and provides children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals with free access to activity, food and nutritional education during school holidays. Eligible families will be able to sign up later in the year and details will be promoted through all schools in Wiltshire in due course. More information about FUEL can be found at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/fuel-programme.

Warm and Safer Wiltshire

Warm & Safe Wiltshire, provided by the council in partnership with Swindon Borough Council and the Centre for Sustainable Energy, is a service to help residents live in warmer, safer and healthier homes. It provides in-depth telephone, home visit and outreach support to people and communities covering a wide package of support: including energy bills, energy saving tips, energy saving vouchers, and funding for heating and insulation improvements in their homes. More information is available at [Warm and Safe Wiltshire advice service](#)

This year, in particular, we are offering grants for broken heating systems and have extensive voucher offer to help with heating and food vouchers. Attached to this briefing is poster for the public highlighting the scheme

Also attached is a leaflet for frontline workers which details training available to frontline workers, which can also be taken up by third sector.

To help different communities access support, we have two Warm and Safe Community case workers covering the North and South of the county providing support to the third sector, home visits and in depth case work. The focus here will be on the 20% most deprived across Wiltshire, Travelling and Boating Communities, and the Military.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation

We are consulting on possible changes to its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working aged people, ensuring it continues to benefit those who need it, and that the scheme evolves in line with Government's developing plans on Universal Credit.

The consultation is now open until 27 November 2023. I'd like to encourage people to respond via the electronic survey online at <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/benefits-council-tax-reduction> - paper copies are available in all of Wiltshire's libraries and main hubs. So far, more than two hundred responses have been received.

Potential changes to the scheme should result in it being more generous to people in hardship who are eligible to receive support, and that in turn should help to reduce the overall council tax debt written off each year due to those who are unable to pay.

¹ [Cost of Living Payments 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Wiltshire Food Banks and Community Food Providers Support Fund

Grant Application

Wiltshire food banks and community food providers, are invited to apply for funding support for the following categories:

- The purchasing of food, or food vouchers (up to £5,000)
- Support costs that enable the food setting to bring in professional financial advice (no funding limit - each proposal will be assessed individually)
- The purchasing of capital items that enable residents to reduce their energy costs, which could be used at the food setting or in residents' own homes (no funding limit – each proposal will be assessed individually)

This funding cannot be used for ongoing operational costs. Eligible organisations will be from the voluntary and community sector and will provide food free of charge, or at a subsidised rate.

Applications are welcomed for this second funding round available from 13th November 2023 – 21st January 2024. Organisations can make one application per funding round.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss their application with their local Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Manager (SEPM). You can find the contact details for your local SEPM [here](#).

Applications will be assessed on multiple factors including the number of households they support, the evidence of need provided and the value of the service being offered to residents. It is anticipated that funding demand will be high, so please be aware that there may not be sufficient funding to fully support all requests.

To submit your application please complete this form and return to areboards@wiltshire.gov.uk. Please note, it is essential that all successful applicants return a proforma regarding the use and impact of the funding. This will be provided to all successful applicants with the required deadlines for submission.

1) Food bank or food provider details

Food bank or food provider details	
Address	
Contact name	
Contact telephone number	
Contact email address	

2) Detail regarding your application?

Please provide a description of how the requested funding will be used? Please use a separate box for purchasing of food, advice costs or other.	Expected no. of households to benefit from the funding?	Amount being applied for?

- 3) Please provide as much evidence and detail as possible as to why this funding is needed (if advice services are being proposed, please provide details of the relevant organisation who will deliver this).

4) How do residents access food from your organisation?

- Referral system
- Open access
- Other - please advise here:

5) Any other relevant information to support your application?

6) Declaration

Supporting information; please confirm that the following documents will be available to inspect upon request (You do not need to send these documents to us):

- I have all the **necessary and relevant** policies and procedures such as Child Protection, Safeguarding Adults, Public Liability Insurance, Access audit, Health & Safety and Environmental assessments in place and will make them available on request.
- The information on this form is correct, that any award received will be spent as specified.

Signature	Name	Position	Date