

£3.8m to help support Somerset households with food and bills this winter

Somerset residents who are struggling to pay the bills this winter could be eligible for support with the cost of food, energy, water, and other essentials.

The county has been allocated £3.8m from the Government's Household Support Fund which will be used to ensure there is a wide range of support available to those who need it between now and the end of March.

Proposals for how the money will be used in Somerset have been developed by the Community Resilience Partnership, a collaboration between Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West and Taunton District Council, South Somerset District Council, and partner organisations in the voluntary and community sector.

Approximately £1.1m is being used to fund food vouchers for children eligible for free school meals over the Christmas, February half term, and Easter school holidays. This includes additional funding so that schools can allocate vouchers to families who are in need of support but do not qualify for free school meals.

A further £1.7m will be distributed via Somerset Citizens Advice, supported by a network of local partners from the voluntary and community sectors, to help households with food, utility bills, and other essentials. Applications can be made through a dedicated and secure online application portal and support will generally be provided in the form of vouchers. Visit [Somerset Household Support Fund \(citizensadvice-somerset.org.uk\)](https://citizensadvice-somerset.org.uk) to apply.

A total of £400,000 is being used to support eligible individuals and families supported by Somerset County Council's Children's Services, £100,000 will go towards the Safe & Warm Somerset helpline to support households in energy poverty, and an £80,000 contribution will go to the Somerset Community Foundation Surviving Winter programme to support elderly and rural residents with their heating.

Angela Kerr, CEO of Citizens Advice South Somerset, said: "At Citizens Advice we understand only too well the impact of rising financial pressures on individuals and families, and we are keen to ensure that the Household Support Fund reaches as many people as possible.

"As well as helping to distribute this fund we continue to offer holistic advice services. Accurate and reliable advice is vital for anyone who is experiencing changing circumstances or complicated problems that they don't know how to deal

with. Our free phone Adviceline Service continues to provide holistic advice on welfare and benefits, money and debt housing, employment and more.”

You can call the Citizens Advice Somerset Adviceline on 0808 2787 842 between 10am and 4pm from Monday to Friday.

More information about the Household Support Fund, including answers to Frequently Asked Questions, can be found by visiting: [Somerset Household Support Fund](#)

For more details on the Somerset Community Foundation Surviving Winter programme visit: [Somerset Community Foundation - Surviving Winter \(somersetcf.org.uk\)](#)

See [Safe & Warm Somerset | Centre for Sustainable Energy \(cse.org.uk\)](#) for more information about the Safe & Warm Somerset helpline.

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Notes to editors:

- £440,000 of funding is being reserved to provide flexibility and responsive funding as the programme is delivered.
- Those applying via Citizens Advice will have to demonstrate that they are a low-income household and struggling to afford household essentials.

For more information, please contact the Press Office on 01823 355020 or email pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk