

Cost of Living Update



February 2024



City of Westminster

Cost of Living Support

More than **£20M** package of support to ease Cost of Living pressures since 2021



67 Winter in the City Venues
Free warm venues offering activities and warm meals



9,550+ free Warm Meals



7,000+ Supermarket Vouchers



An extra £342k allocated to Food Charities



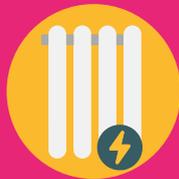
1,084 Households receiving financial advice helped with the Cost of Living Support Fund



14,000 Children receive a Free Lunch every day



330 Households provided energy support and advice – Household average saving of £250



An extra £592k+ to Advice services



21,000 young People accessing Holiday Activity and Food with **200k** healthy meals served

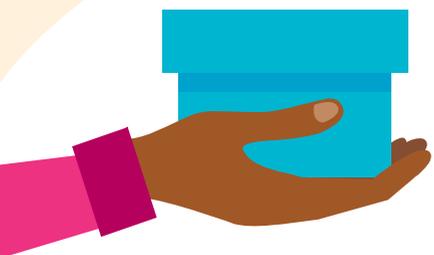


Introduction

In July 2022, Westminster City Council launched a **Cost of Living Strategy**, setting out a plan to help tackle the crisis.

This was followed by our council declaring the cost of living crisis an emergency in September 2022. As identified in the Strategy, people on lower incomes are most impacted by higher rates of inflation, as more money is spent on fuel and food; an estimated 31,000 households across the city are particularly exposed by these rises in living costs.

So far, we have delivered £9.9m of government funded support and have invested more than £9m of our own resources to tackle the crisis. This includes the £2m Cost of Living Fund with an investment of £1m each for 22/23 and 23/24 respectively. This effectively extends a package of support in excess of £20m to ease cost of living pressures in 2024.



We have extended a package of support in excess of

£20M

to ease cost of living pressures in 2024.

Support provided includes:

Direct Support

We have invested in direct support via vouchers linked to financial or energy advice, where **1,084 households receiving financial advice were helped** via the Cost of Living Support Fund.



Support via Food Vouchers

We have supported those most in need facing food insecurity by issuing **more than 7,000 supermarket vouchers**.



Food Support

We allocated **an extra £342,000 to food charities and food banks** who have used this money to support approximately **36,700 people** and **13,500 households** between April and October 2023.



Energy Advice

We have provided energy support and advice to **more than 330 households**, delivering an average **saving of £250 per household**. Owing to its success, we continue to invest in energy advice with an increased capacity to **support 400 households**.



Support provided includes: (continued)

Advice Services

We have invested **an additional £592,000** in advice services through which we have supported approximately **3,232 people** so far and achieved financial gains for the residents to the effect of **£4 for every £1 we spent**.



Winter in the City

We delivered a successful Winter in the City campaign in 2022 and further renewed the programme for the winter of 2023/4. This has seen **67 free, warm venues** offer activities or warm meals totalling **more than 9,550 free warm meals** provided so far.

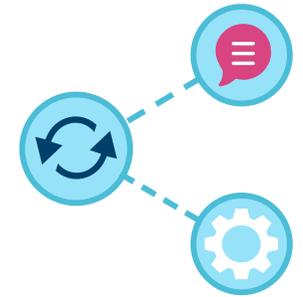
Training sessions for frontline staff

We have **provided information sessions** to equip council teams to support, signpost or guide those in need with the most appropriate form of cost of living support when out in the community.



Working with partners

We **work with partners** such as the Food and Energy Network to listen to feedback from providers, remain aware of changes in need as they happen, consult about priorities and share service information.



Cost of Living Support Hub

We created a **dedicated web hub** to ensure that residents are provided with clear and up-to-date information that will allow access to support needed as well as information about community locations that can support them through the winter.



Holiday Activities and Free School Meals

Since 2021, funding from the Department for Education and additional investment from the council has enabled the creation of over **21,000 opportunities for free holiday activities and food**, for children and young people.

Over 200,000 meals have now been served during the school holidays.

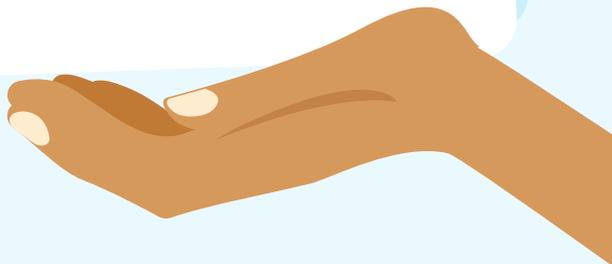


Future support



Cost of Living still remains a crisis.

- ✓ In response, we are investing a further £1m to help residents from April 2024, bringing our total investment to more than £20m.
- ✓ We will continue to identify and target the most vulnerable groups and strategise future interventions based on evidence of need.
- ✓ We have and will continue to make the case to the government for the continuation of the Household Support Fund and national support for those most in need in 2024/25.
- ✓ We have taken into account our learnings from what worked well to inform our future decisions. We will make our investments in three phases and will direct the first phase of investment towards Advice Services and Food Support for our residents.



Our partners

We want to thank all the partners we are working with to deliver our Cost of Living Strategy. They include:

Advice partners

Citizens Advice Westminster, Asylum Aid, Paddington Law, Z2K, The Abbey Community Trust, Cardinal Hume Centre, Midaye, Kulan Somali Association, MEWSO, Age UK Westminster

Food partners

North Paddington Foodbank, Westbourne Park Pantry, Abbey Centre Community Pantry, Westminster Chapel Foodbank, Mary Smith's Pantry, HAFS Academy, Emmanuel Church, Harrow Rd, Westbourne Park Baptist Church, Pimlico Angels, The Abbey Centre

Healthy Winter Grant venues

The Abbey Centre, St Vincent's Family Project, Westminster Chapel, Naglaa's World, Sport 4 Health, Westminster Bangladeshi Welfare Trust, Clear Village Charitable Trust, Open Age, London Advocacy Group, Kulan Somali Organisation, The Avenues Youth Project, Queens Park Bangladeshi Society, Sunah's Crisis Team, Community for All, Marylebone Bangladeshi Society, Central London Youth Development Trust, Penfold Community Hub, MEWSO, Mosaic Community Trust, North Paddington Youth Club, Westside Basketball Club, Third Sector Media, Make it Happen, Happy Lizzy Event Planning, Maida Hill Place, Pro Touch SA, London Tigers, Midaye Somali Network, Dance West





For more information,
please visit our web hub:
**[www.westminster.gov.uk/
cost-of-living-support](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support)**



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