

1 The Barking and Dagenham Whole-System Response

- 1.1 This core offer, working together in close collaboration with partners offers, is already working to support residents in the face of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 1.2 All this support is already in place and functioning well for the resident, although there is as always room for learning across the organisation. However, the challenge that our residents now face requires the system to join up around the resident more, rather than the resident and partners seeking to navigate the system, so people can get help earlier and more easily wherever they touch the system.

Existing Financial Support Schemes

- 1.3 Residents can make a claim for any of the support schemes and will automatically be considered for awards across all schemes as a whole – a holistic approach is taken so the correct support can be allocated according to individual need, and this enables us to ensure each fund usage is maximised to the full.
- 1.4 There have been a total of 1,208 claims received since 1 April, with 578 individual awards made and an additional 23,603 Free School Meals vouchers issued, and 16,650 food and energy vouchers/parcels distributed in this time.
- 1.5 The full description and breakdown of the schemes can be seen below:
 - 1.5.1 DHP is a government funded grant to LA's yearly and is subject to legislative restrictions - must be in receipt of either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Element to be able to apply and be considered for an award. It is means tested and full income and expenditure checks are done in all cases. DHP fund can be used to cover shortfalls in rent due to LHA caps, under occupancy charges, welfare reforms such as benefit cap, excess income benefit reduction in HB and/or Universal Credit and Rent deposit and rent in advance support payments.
 - 1.5.2 HSF is a government funded grant. The current HSF scheme covers the period 6 April to 30 September 2022 and, as announced in March spring statement by Government, an additional extension was confirmed which will cover the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 due to cost-of-living crisis. This scheme has caveats around what it can be used for and % of spend that must be directed at both Families with Children (33% minimum) and Pensioners (33% minimum). Awards can be made to support energy, water, energy, and water related wider essentials (cookers, fridges, pans, clothes, blankets, energy saving bulbs, draught excluders etc), food and wider essentials linked to food. Within this scheme we financially support the Free School Meal holiday voucher program and grants to third party partners we work with to support and supply vulnerable residents with food, vouchers, energy vouchers and energy key meter top ups. This funding is not expected to continue beyond March 2023.
 - 1.5.3 IAP is the local authority funded hardship scheme that works in tandem with the above schemes to pick any gaps where support cannot be paid – see policy document – can cover food, energy, debt, travel, clothes, furniture etc

1.5.4 ERS is a one-off government funded energy rebate payment in response to the increased energy prices. This portion of funding is the discretionary support element left after all band H to F properties have been allocated their £150 award – this excess can be utilised to support residents struggling with increased energy bills and energy debts (this ends 30 November 2022)

Scheme Name	Household Support Fund (HSF)	Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme (DHP)	Energy Rebate Scheme (ERS)	Local Hardship Schemes (IAP)
Gov contribution	£4,324,102	£712,986	£560,400 (one off grant, for 2022/23)	N/A
LA Contribution	N/A	£300,000	N/A	£300,000
Total Allocated	<p>Currently allocated and paid is £1,865,697. This includes:</p> <p>Free School Meals: £173,444.99 = 11,563 vouchers issued by schools for May half term (£15 per child) £602,000.00 = 12,040 vouchers issued by schools for summer holiday (£50 per child)</p> <p>Pensioner Energy Payments: £728,550.00 = 4857 pensioner households in receipt of Council Tax Support (£150 payment each)</p> <p>Food Network Partners: £250,000.00 = (9 grants of between £20,000 and £50,000) estimated @ £15 each package = 16,650 residents/visits</p> <p>DABD: £48,000.00 = supporting vulnerable disabled households</p> <p>Individual Residents Awards: 185 payments – food, energy & wider essentials - £111,952 awarded</p>	<p>Currently awarded £125,950</p> <p>81 Approved Awards since 1st April 2022</p>	<p>Currently allocated and paid £113,454</p> <p>312 awards (240 of those are £150.00 energy support payments)</p>	<p>Currently allocated and paid IAP is £20,820.00</p> <p>44 approved awards.</p>

Community Solutions Existing Support Offer with Partners

- 1.6 There are a range of Universal Services, as part of Community Solutions, that are already working with partners to support residents who are struggling. These are outlined below and will all need to be closely connected with community partners offers as part of a community led response to the ongoing crisis.
- 1.7 Community Hubs are spaces that are run by Community Solutions, but also aim to boost collaborative partnership working by opening spaces where partners can work together to support residents. This is part of an ambition to put services, support and information closer to where residents are, while supporting more collaborative and joined up working across the system.

- 1.8 Community Food Clubs: residents are referred (can self-refer in some clubs) for 12 weeks of support, but this can be longer. Each week, they are invited to make up a bag of shopping from available produce. They are also offered advice and referrals to other services. Fundamentally these are spaces where residents can access food, while also looking to address the root cause of any issues that are being presented, working closely with residents to do so. These are run from different community centres and spaces across the Borough. Three of the clubs are run by the Council in a Community hub: William Bellamy; Marks Gate and Sue Bramley. Two are run by community partners in Council buildings: The Source in the Barking Learning Centre and Churches Together in Dagenham Library. Al Madina Mosque run a club from their own premises, and there are two due to open at Grays Court and Darul Ummah Goresbrook Mosque. In the period of 2021-2022 (April – Mar) the food clubs averaged 134 members per week, 4,437 visits, saving members nearly £90,000. In the more recent period from (April – June 2022) the clubs averaged 212 families per week, visiting 688 times, saving members over £13,000 so far.
- 1.9 The Homes and Money Hub team also link into provision for wider community welfare support, for example charity funds, foodbanks and projects providing clothing, furniture and white goods. This involves the HamHub team working closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau, working from the same location in the Barking Learning Centre and with referrals being provided from one to the other in both directions, providing residents with a joined-up offer with an effective handover process and referral pathway. The team supported 2,857 households directly through casework in 21/22, but also supported 3,712 households through their Universal offer and more through on-line tools and via partners. In doing so residents were supported to claim additional welfare benefits of £1,758,974 and reach agreement for £980,000 in rent and council tax arrears. Since April 2022, the HamHub has worked with 492 residents and achieved: £284,770 in income maximisation and financial outcomes; £209,574 in Rent arrears reductions (priority debt); £44,916 in Council Tax arrears reductions (priority debt); 1332 financial assessments undertaken; 854 payment/budgeting plans undertaken
- 1.10 B&D Money It enables residents to directly access support, or alternatively provides a resource for Council staff and public and voluntary sector partners to support residents. It signposts to local hardship funding options; other local and national grants for those struggling financially; complete income maximisation checks to ensure households are claiming all entitled benefits; money management and budgeting tools; free local or national specialist debt advice.
- 1.11 These ComSol Universal services are working closely with the NHS and other health partners to support residents. For example, by actively promoting and connecting residents to the 'Help with Prescriptions' scheme which saves residents money when accessing their medical prescriptions, either through qualifying for help with the NHS Low Income Scheme; being automatically entitled to free NHS prescriptions; or applying for certificates that entitle residents to free NHS prescriptions.
- 1.12 All the above resident focused services which form a key part of resident pathways to support and connections, will need to continue working closely with partners and supporting residents as part of the co-ordinated partnership response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Each of these services already has developing relationships with

community partners, and these relationships will need to be strengthened and given increased capacity as part of any coordinated response to the crisis. All resident facing Council services need to be aligned with partners if this co-ordinated approach is to have the maximum possible positive impact for residents.

The Wider Council Support Offer for Residents

Work and Skills Support

- 1.13 The Borough's unemployment rate at 7.7% is one of the highest in the country and 9.2% of residents have no qualifications, the second highest in London. A significant number of those residents that are in work are low-paid– and as a consequence are increasingly likely to be affected by in-work poverty as living costs increase. The service is pro-active in that it works with individuals to give information, advice and guidance to enable them to make an informed decision about their preferred pathway and offers support to them to overcome barriers to participation, such as caring responsibilities, disabilities or other health problems. Practical support is detailed below:
- 1.13.1 The Adult College curriculum offer is aligned to local and regional strategies to engage with residents on a community level and to progress them on to skills and vocational programmes to support their progression into sustainable employment, as well as to upskill those already in employment to aid career progression. This includes collaborative work with other delivery partners through the Barking and Dagenham Adult and Community Educations Skills Forum (BDACES), which was set up to create more seamless progression pathways between for residents between providers.
- 1.13.2 Collaborations and referral pathways across other Community Solutions and other Council services have been improved in recent years, including commissioning from Adult Social Care for wellbeing, skills training and employment support for those with mental health and SEND needs, delivered by the specialist Vocational Support Service within Work and Skills. The team are currently working with colleagues in Inclusive Growth and Adult Social Care to design and fundraise for a new supported employment programme targeting these cohorts, ensuring people with more complex needs do not get left behind in the context of high unemployment.

Adults Care and Support:

- 1.14 This will enable private homeowners, housing association tenants and private tenants with disabilities to live as independently as possible in good quality homes that meet their needs through aids and adaptations. Some of the benefits include scrapping the means test for major adaptation works under £15,000; providing Top-Up funding for major adaptations that exceed the current mandatory limit of £30,000; and the launching of a series of new discretionary grants.
- 1.15 Key benefits include: the use of more energy efficient devices – reducing utility costs for residents; reduced dependency of service user landline via use of 4G/5G alternatives – reducing billing costs for alarm activations; and enhanced devices which keep people safer in their own home for longer - mitigating the impact of lost economic productivity due to ill-health or caring responsibilities.

- 1.16 With regards to care for older adults, there has been a high uplift with commissioned providers, along with a commitment to reviewing rates again in October 2022 in case of high levels of inflation. This will help to ensure that those employed in the care industry are supported with any increases being focused on increased wages.
- 1.17 In addition, there are a range of contracts through Care and Support that provide generic and specialist information, advice and guidance and floating support to residents in line with the Care Act duty. Providers include Citizen's Advice Bureau, DABD, ILA and Carers of Barking and Dagenham

Early Help:

- 1.18 Increased Parenting support services will be provided from the first quarter of next year to support vulnerable families, who may be in crisis to provide in the home and immediate support
- 1.19 Conflict resolution support services will be provided from the first quarter of next year to support families, who are in conflict due to one of the concerns being debt and financial constraint. In addition, online Family Group conferencing will be brought within our Targeted Early Help service to support family members, friends and communities' networks in providing wrap round support to vulnerable families and enable better resilience. Along with this, the IAG available to families will be improved, as to how to access services.
- 1.20 A further 27 additional posts are being recruited within the Targeted Early Help service to support the management increased demand. In addition, the team for the Around the Schools offer will be strengthened, with support being offered to pupils who may have been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, helping them and their families to access services they need. In addition, the Mental Health Support Service will be expanded into a further four schools.

Community Partners Support and Offer

- 1.21 Community and faith groups are already supporting residents in these challenging times. In working alongside partners, the Council will continue to build more effective support mechanisms for and with residents.
- 1.22 Since the successful delivery of BD CAN in response to Covid-19, the social infrastructure of the Borough has continued to develop, while relationships between the Council and Social Sector partners have also strengthened, with increasing numbers of shared projects and initiatives to better support the Borough's residents.
- 1.23 Significant progress has been made through working with the holders of the Social Infrastructure contract for the Borough, the BD_Collective. Networks have been launched in a variety of areas, including early help for families; adult social care; food banks; sports and young people. Partners now come together through the networks curated by the BD_Collective, to explore solutions to deep seated issues, both in terms of how organisations work together and how residents get the support they need.

- 1.24 The BD CAN network was able to be activated so quickly because of the years spent building relationships and working in partnership with the social sector in the borough. The BD_Collective, who played a key co-ordinating role as part of BD CAN, have continued to increase the capacity of the sector and strengthen relationships between partners. The role of communities in tackling the cost-of-living crisis will be as critical as their role during the Covid 19 pandemic. Community groups and local networks are best placed to understand and respond to the needs of residents in their local areas and the Council's well-developed partnerships and networks will need to be supported and developed further to enable this.
- 1.25 Through this developing social infrastructure and the community-based services of Community Solutions that are already supporting residents, there is a clear pathway forwards for a Cost-of-Living Alliance that can deliver support to residents in the face of the crisis, co-ordinated by the BD_Collective as they did so successfully in BD CAN, as part of a partnership focused and whole systems approach.