

Household Support Fund Forum Central Report

Evaluation of Activity Jul 2023 - Feb 2024

April 2024



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Introduction and Overview

Through the Household Support Fund, Forum Central was awarded £650,000 to allocate in small grants to organisations in Leeds, to provide direct support to vulnerable households in Leeds.

Central Government funding was made available via Leeds City Council to ensure that community groups and organisations could provide support to vulnerable and those on low incomes with the costs of energy, food and essential items and we have received strong feedback illustrating how the grants positively impacted individuals and families facing severe hardships, such as sanctions, lack of savings, and sudden crises.

Stories provided often emphasised the emotional and practical impact of receiving timely help, like food vouchers or direct financial support. Whilst the work has had a significant impact, longer-term funding commitments are required to enhance stability and planning.

Forum Central is able to reach a broad range of different and diverse organisations and to ensure these organisations can also become linked in to other support and capacity building through membership and sharing of contacts, invites to events, links to Workforce and organisational governance resources etc.

Through social media and Forum Centrals multiple networks, organisations and small grassroots community groups were made aware of the funding. Networks included; Learning Disability groups, Local Care Partnerships, Trauma informed communities including those working with young people, Men's Health Unlocked, Neighbourhood Networks, mental health and physical and sensory impairment.

A total of £623,000 was awarded in grants of between £1000 and £5000 to 99 different third sector organisations between July 2023 date and February 2024.

Grants were awarded to a diverse range of frontline delivery organisations across all areas of the city.

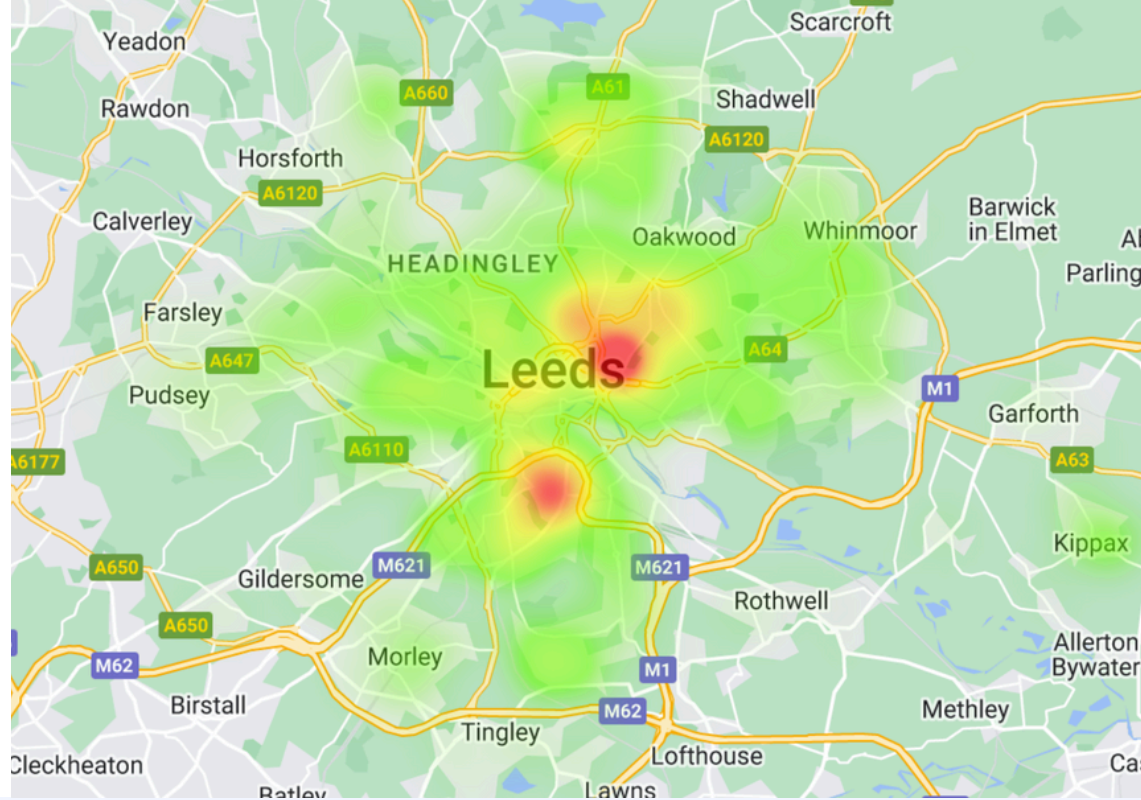
Organisations were asked to apply via an online application form and detail where they worked, who they would target, how they would meet that need and provide a financial breakdown. The panel of four staff members from Forum Central met monthly to assess applications and award funding.

Forum Central worked closely with Voluntary Action Leeds to ensure the grants were used to complement the work of the Leeds Community Anchor Network.



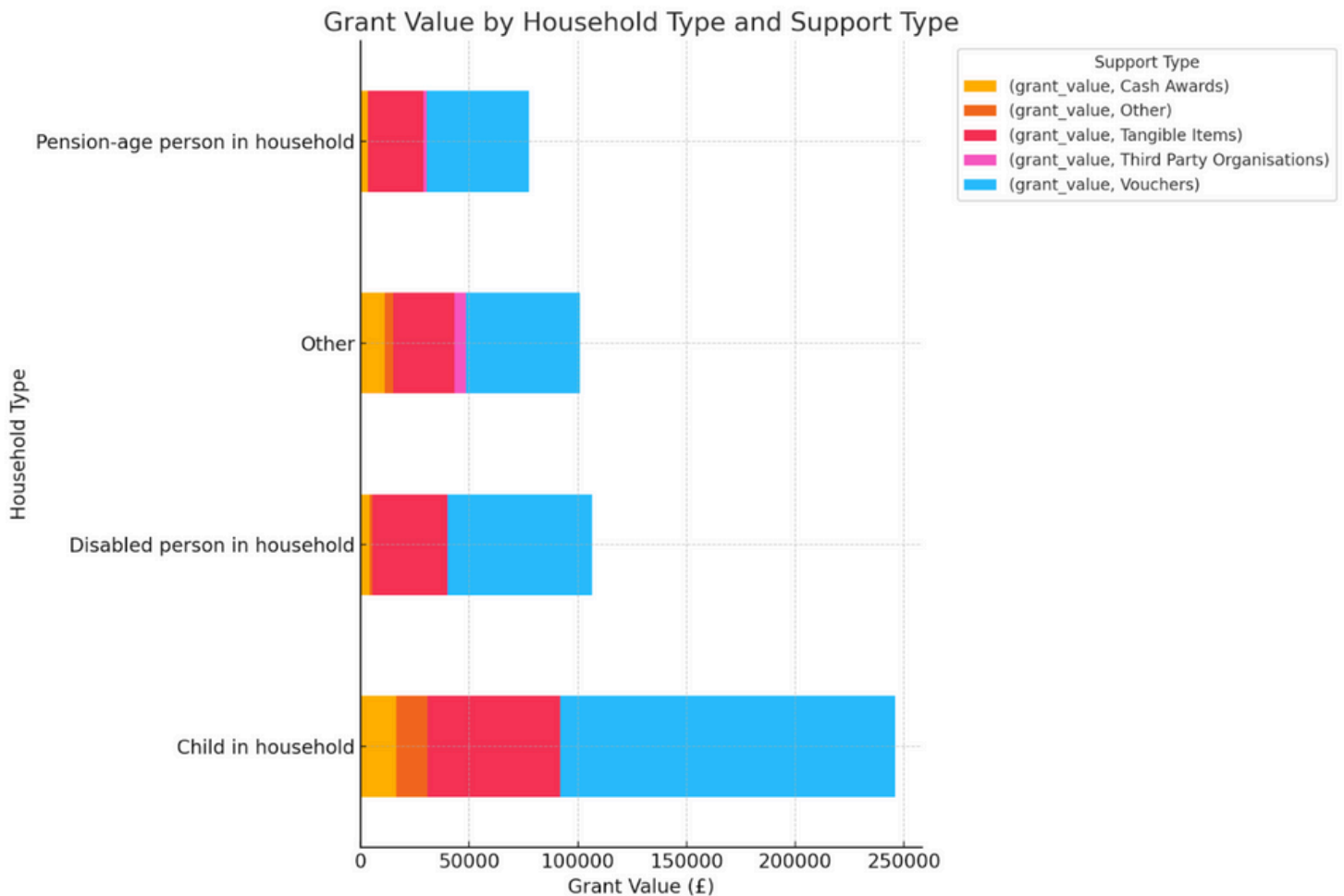
Location of funding

This map highlights the households the funding was able to support, with the red highlighting a higher number of households. The map evidences that organisations funded were able to provide support across the city.

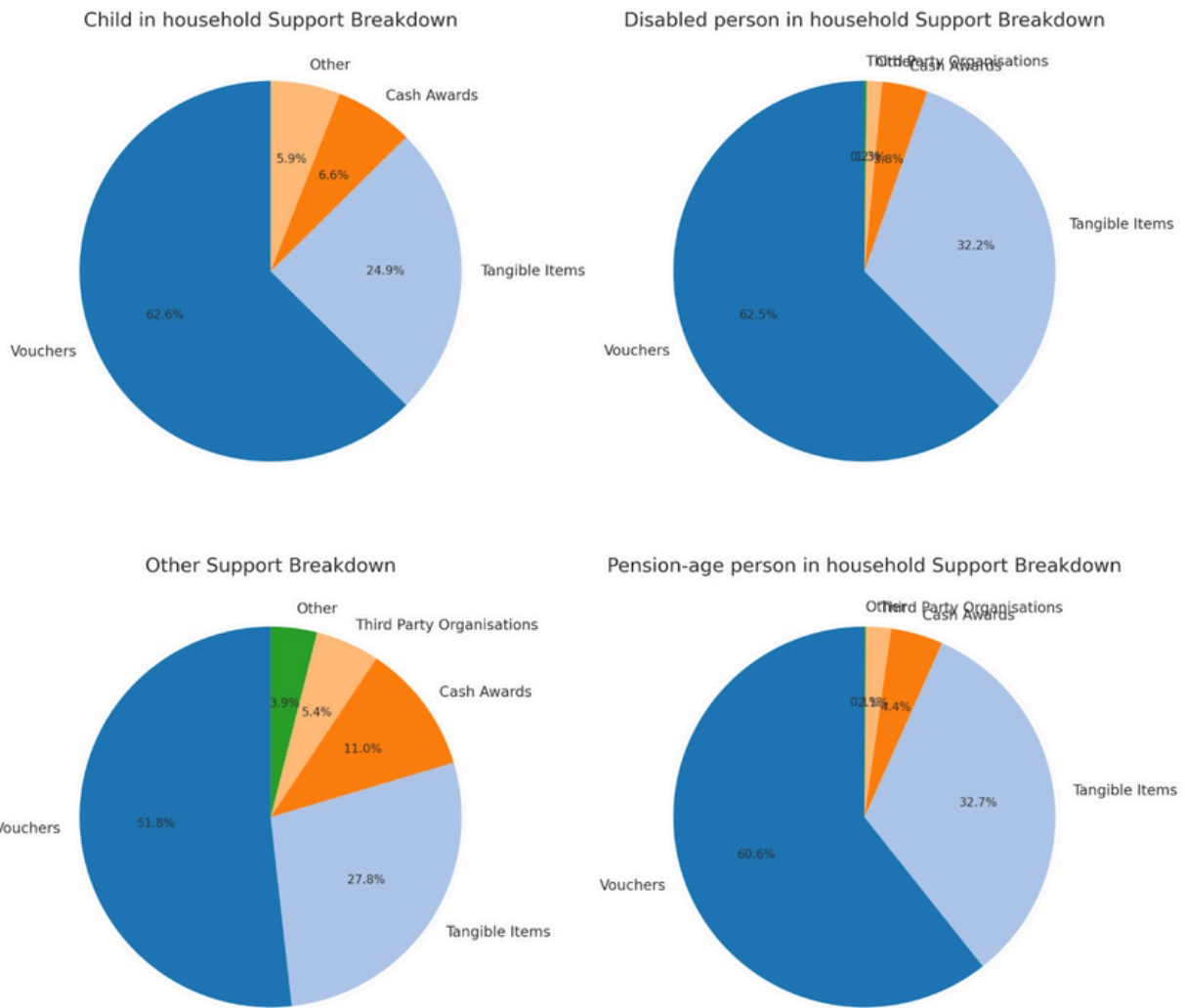


Breakdown of funding by household and support type

Half of the financial support was awarded to households with children: with the largest type of support provided being vouchers, with pension age disability and other households also mainly receiving vouchers.



Percentage Breakdown of Support Types by Household



Our figures evidence that a total of 9,799 awarded were given to households.

Total volume of awards split by household composition:

- Households with children: **4,542**
- Households with pensioners: **1,605**
- Households with a disabled person: **1,128**
- Other households: **2,524**

Households with children	Households with pensioners	Households with a disabled person	Other
4,542	1,605	1,128	2,524

Total volume of awards (by household composition): **9,799**

Total volume of awards split by category:

- Food (excluding Free School Meal (FSM) support in the holidays): **7,911**
- FSM support in the holidays: **34**
- Energy and water: **691**
- Essentials linked to energy and water: **123**
- Wider essentials: **903**
- Housing costs: **137**
- Advice services: **0**

Total volume of awards (by category):
9,799



Food (excluding FSM support in the holidays)	Free School Meal support in the holidays	Energy and water	Essentials linked to energy and water	Wider essentials	Housing costs	Advice services	Total volume of awards (by category)
7,911	34	691	123	903	137	0	9,799

Evaluation and Feedback

We asked all recipients to complete monitoring at the end of the grant.
Key feedback included:

What Worked Well

- Voucher systems were frequently mentioned as an effective method of providing immediate relief and maintaining dignity for recipients.
- Specific support for families and individuals in dire situations helped address immediate needs efficiently.
- Collaborative efforts with local community groups or services were able to build on previous relationships to provide additional community support.

Challenges and Limitations

- Some efforts were less effective than hoped. For example, unexpected needs arose, such as the realisation that oil heaters could cause additional financial burdens.
- Increased sanctions and systemic issues hampered the effectiveness of the support.
- Increasing need from community members and that this emergency support is helpful but a short-term solution.
- Administrative issues, such as delays in processing support or difficulty in reapplying for funding.
- The mismatch between the types of food available in hampers and the dietary needs or preferences of the recipients.



Case Studies

Numerous stories were shared illustrating how the grants positively impacted individuals and families facing severe hardships, such as sanctions, lack of savings, and sudden crises.

Stories provided often emphasised the emotional and practical impact of receiving timely help, like food vouchers or direct financial support.

“A single parent with four children recently faced significant financial distress when she was issued a utility bill of £1000, which she was unable to pay within the designated time frame. This brought about a decline in her mental health, and she sought advice and guidance to help her cope with the situation. Our organisation provided her with food vouchers which enabled her to allocate her own funds to pay a portion of the bill. Afterwards she agreed to pay the outstanding amount in instalments. Additionally we provided her with additional vouchers to purchase food for her family, as she had been struggling to meet their nutritional needs due to financial constraints. This assistance had a positive impact on her mental health and overall well-being.”

Beetey Din



“During a Stay Well This Winter drop-in session, a member attended the drop-in asking for help. They were scared to put the heating on at home due to cost and their house never went above 7 degrees. They had a disability and multiple health conditions. Our project manager signposted to some local support services including Greendoctor, and was also able to provide a £50 HSF supermarket voucher to alleviate some financial pressure and encouraged them to put the heating on to warm their house over the coldest days’.

People in Action

One family had already been struggling but an unexpected sudden death in the wider family put them under even greater strain. They were having to cope with the struggle of affording food, bereavement and supporting the wider family which resulted in additional expense. We were aware of their situation so delivered food and a voucher to them within a few days of their sad news. The mum said, "You guys don't know what this means to us. I knew Flourishing Families was gonna be there for us. I had nothing much in the cupboards and then you show up with food and a Tesco's voucher. Thank you so much."

Flourishing Families

"We have a long term client that attended for a support appointment for an energy voucher via the grant program. Whilst at the appointment the support worker asked questions around the clients living situation, the client highlighted that they had not had a cooker for over a year and was mainly eating cereal. The client explained that they had a carer, who was aware of their lack of cooker and that they regularly use food banks, but could not cook the food they brought home. The team supported the client with a second grant for a cooker and raised the concerns as a safeguarding case with their provider, an investigation into the matter is underway."

BHA Skyline

"The Councillor referred a client in her 80's, who had COPD, no heating or hot water and was unable to fund a new Boiler and Green doctors advised that there would be an 8 week wait for funding. Asked if we could provide a heater. We bought and delivered a heater that evening and delivered a grocery shop the next day. We also topped up the electric metre with £60 pounds of credit to ensure she had sufficient energy to get her through the Christmas period. She appeared very grateful for the support that we had given."

Leeds Irish Health and Homes

Case study from Imagine If theatre co.

It is with great sadness that we have heard that Chesca Joy the CEO of Imagine If theatre company died on the 1st May 2024. Chesca was committed to supporting others, her compassionate and determined nature meant that she was able to support individuals with their immediate needs and provide hope for the future.

This is a case study Chesca provided to detail the great work she and the team provided utilising HSF funding (names changed):

“I met with Helen and her mum, Liz who have severe learning disabilities. They live together with Helen’s other young siblings and are struggling with some of their bills - rent, council tax, food, school uniform etc.

Liz ended up crying during our first meeting as she had been summoned to court by Leeds City Council due to the arrears she was in and she was extremely overwhelmed and confused at what she owed to which company and how she was going to pay it.

We worked with Helen and Liz over a three week period and offered them direct financial support with their bills and food, as well as practical support (going through their bills one by one with them and creating a spreadsheet with clear information for Helen and Liz to utilise) and emotional support.”

Liz said of our support:

“It has helped me loads, especially being able to buy some shoes for my little boys means I’m not having sleepless nights anymore”.

“The money has helped to lift weight off my shoulders as I am in a lot of debt. This has helped my mental health because I can now set up comfortable payment plans to maintain the rest of my debt”.



Recommendations from grant holders:

- Longer-term funding commitment for HSF from central government to be distributed in grant form to community organisations, this would enhance stability and aid planning.
- Organisations highlighted that in future grants they would like the opportunity to seek to improve their monitoring and feedback mechanisms within the organisations to enhance the distribution and effectiveness of support.
- Further flexibility in the application processes for small groups and communities, such as applications via the telephone.
- Continued use of direct voucher systems for food which allow recipients to choose what they need most.



The organisations involved in the distribution of grants:

- Association of Blind Asians(ABA) Leeds
- Age UK Leeds
- All Community Connect CIC
- Angels of Freedom
- Angel of Youth
- Ascendance Rep
- BARCA
- BHA Leeds Skyline
- Basis Yorkshire
- Beetey Din
- Bridge Community Church
- Chapeltown And Harehills Learning Project
- CATCH Leeds
- Crossgates and District Good Neighbours Scheme
- Circles Of Life Voices Of Men
- Circles Of Life Women Together
- Complete Woman CIC
- Calvary International Christian Centre
- Canopy Housing
- Care & Repair
- Carers Leeds
- Catholic Care



The organisations involved in the distribution of grants continued

- Chabad Lubavitch Leeds
- Champions Community Sport and Health CIC
- DASSI (SEN SUPPORT group for Black and Ethnically Diverse Mums)
- Damasq
- Disability Families Middleton
- Eritrean Cultural Centre Leeds
- Feel Good Factor
- Flourishing Families Leeds
- Grassroots Enterprise for Social Inclusion and Poverty Relief
- Getaway Girls
- Getting Clean
- Gipsil
- Grandparents and Kinship support group
- Health For All
- Helping Hands UK
- HOPE
- Harehills Park Bowling Club
- Hamwattan Centre
- Happy Tears Foundation
- Holbeck Moor FC
- Home-Start Leeds
- ISSE Ltd
- Imagine If theatre
- Immolite Yorkshire CIC
- Junior Sports Hub
- KIPPAX Parish Council
- Karma Dance CIC
- Kidz Klub Leeds
- LASSN - Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network
- Leeds Black Elders Association
- Leeds Muslim Youth Forum
- Leeds Grand Mosque Foodbank
- Leeds Irish Health and Homes - LIHH
- Leeds Jewish Welfare Board - LJWB
- Leeds Sao Tome and Principe community group
- Leeds Gate
- Leeds Jewish Housing Association
- Leeds Refugee Forum
- Leeds Ukrainian community Association

- Leeds Women's Aid
- Light Up Black and African Heritage Calderdale
- MHA Communities Horsforth
- MHA Communities South Leeds
- Morley Shed
- New Wortley Community Association
- Nigerian Yorkshire Communities Network UK CIC
- New Wortley Community Association
- Nigerian Yorkshire Communities Network UK CIC
- Pafras
- Paperworks (Harrogate) Limited
- People In Action
- People Matters
- Pudsey Community Project
- Reestablish
- SARSVL
- Sikh Elders Service
- Shantona
- SLATE
- SLATE Charity Group
- St Luke's Cares
- Sabhrang Health and Wellbeing Association
- Soup & More
- South Bank Sanctuary
- St Paul's Ireland Wood
- St Vincents Support Centre
- Sunshine and Smiles
- The Friendship Circle of Leeds
- Delpha Alpha Delta (DAD)
- The Gambia Welfare Society
- The Market Place (Leeds)
- Touchstone
- URC Leeds
- West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network - WYDAN
- Women Arise
- Women's Health Matters
- Women's Whispers
- Yorkshire and Humberside Maternity Stream of Sanctuary
- Zarach
- yum / Armley Action Team