

5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Dear Chancellor

**RE: Household Support Fund 2024/25**

I am writing to you as the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living at Lambeth Council, to urge you to give councils early notice of the value of Household Support Fund (HSF) payments in the coming financial year.

The HSF has been a lifeline for our lowest income residents throughout the cost of living crisis. It has proven essential in providing vital support during this difficult period: ensuring that households with children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) are supported during the holidays; safeguarding sufficient local welfare support; targeting financial support to those most in need; and helping our local food voluntary sector to meet increased costs and demand.

The HSF has been a lifeline for our lowest income residents. In Lambeth, we have supplemented this funding with the council's own, to create an expanded, £10 million package of help for residents struggling with the cost of living crisis this year. The HSF remains crucial to our work maximising the support available to some of our most vulnerable residents - including through extending FSM entitlement, increasing direct payments to financially precarious households, expanding our Emergency Support Scheme for those in crisis, supporting council tenants impacted by increases in energy and hot water costs, and providing extra free childcare for low-income families.

Food inflation remains in double figures whilst gas prices remain 60% higher and electricity 40% higher than they were two years ago. The cost of living crisis will remain very real for our lowest income residents in 2024/25 and beyond.

We welcome your positive response to the question from Sir Stephen Timms on November 22nd, that HSF would continue in 2024/25. We urge you to meet your commitment in Parliament and provide councils with *early notice* of the value of HSF the government will provide in 2024/25.

This will enable the council to undertake the necessary service and financial planning for how it will continue to provide the much-needed support for our lowest income residents as the real-terms squeeze on their finances - and the council's - continues in 2024/25.

I look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr David Amos  
**Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living**