



Impact
on **Urban**
Health



22 January 2024

Dear Chancellor

We are writing to you as the collective group responsible for designing our plans for, and distributing, Household Support Fund in Lambeth to urge you to continue the Fund in 2024/25.

Uncertainty over continuation of the fund is causing considerable disruption to the system that supports the borough's lowest income and most vulnerable households. This is impacting the continuity of services and, if withdrawn, threatening the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents. This is at a time when the cost of living crisis continues to significantly impact those who struggle to afford to eat and heat their homes: food inflation remains at 8%, the wholesale price of gas remains 2.5 times what it was before the crisis and 41% of our residents say it is difficult to pay their energy bills.

For those the Household Support Fund is designed to support, the cost of living crisis continues and is projected to continue throughout 2024.

In Lambeth lone parents, disabled residents, carers and residents from our Black, Asian and Multi Ethnic communities are disproportionately represented amongst our poorest residents. Throughout this ongoing crisis we have utilised the Household Support fund to support them through targeted activity including:

- Reducing holiday hunger for children in receipt of free school meals through the provision of vouchers during the school holidays, distributed through our schools
- Providing additional capacity to organisations providing at-scale foodbank or surplus food distribution services to ensure they are able to continue to provide sufficient food support to those unable to afford the increased cost of food
- Ensuring sufficient support is available within the council's local welfare assistance Emergency Support Scheme to provide those residents experiencing a crisis with primarily food and fuel support and
- Distributing targeted cash support to residents identified as having the lowest affordability and highest exposure to risk factors that increase the impact of the cost of living crisis (e.g. lone parents, carers, disabled residents)

The impact of withdrawal of this funding will be immediate and further disadvantage our most vulnerable residents. Our lowest income households (i.e, those with a household income of less than £7,000 per year and eligible for free school meals) with children will be without additional support to feed their children during the school holidays impacting on their health and wellbeing and

increasing inequalities. Our emergency food provision will be less able to support increasing levels of demand that have never returned to pre-covid levels. Residents requiring crisis support will be unable to access support. And efforts to use our data to improve the financial resilience of our most vulnerable residents through targeted support will have to stop.

Long-term government action to address the poverty that existed in Lambeth prior to the cost of living crisis is required. In the absence of that the Household Support Fund is essential for providing support to our lowest income residents for whom the cost of living crisis has had a compounding impact. As such we urge you to provide early indication of your intention to continue the Fund in 2024/25 so that we can plan the continuation of this vital support to residents without interruption.

Yours sincerely

Cllr David Amos, Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living, London Borough of Lambeth

Chris Ashley Jones, Chair, Lambeth Schools Partnership

Peter Babudu, Executive Director, Impact on Urban Health

Cllr Jim Dickson, Chair, Lambeth Health and Wellbeing Board

Dr Ruth Hutt, Director of Public Health, London Borough of Lambeth

Elizabeth Maytom MBE, Project Lead, Brixton & Norwood Foodbank (Trussell Trust)

Alastair Smith-Agbaje, Chief Executive Officer, Healthy Living Platform