

# EIA001024 Review of ongoing delivery of the 'Cost-of-Living' programme

## About your EIA

Reference Number:	EIA001024
Subject of EIA:	Review of ongoing delivery of the 'Cost-of-Living' programme
Description:	<p>The Cost-of-Living Programme was initiated by the Council in October 2022. This was in the face of the City's unprecedented challenges in caring for its vulnerable communities. The pandemic, and the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, conspired to drive inflation up to 10.7%, the highest rate for decades. The price rises exacerbated already serious challenges in fuel, food, and general poverty. At the same time, public sector budgets were stretched by the same economic context. The programme utilises the Household Support Fund (moving into round 7), provided through the Department of Work and Pensions, to support interventions that focus on alleviating the impacts of the Cost of Living Crisis. The programme has two main objectives. The first is to immediately support vulnerable individuals and families who are either in crisis or are in danger of being in crisis because of the Cost-of-Living emergency. The programme aims to reach residences in crisis, including but not limited to families, carers, people in temporary accommodation or struggling with homelessness, people with disabilities, pensioners, domestic abuse survivors and refugees and migrants. Phase 1 This first phase included mobilisation of "business as usual" engagement and combined it with hyperlocal support networks, as well as the provision of a coordinating mechanism to harness broad support from the Council and wider city. This effort included extended hours and drop-in advice services delivered by the council, a dedicated Cost-of-Living help line, and series of grant funded projects. These projects included setting up a network of Warm Welcome spaces and the provision of funds to support local food banks. Specific assistance included: Application Based Support -Hardship Grant Payments. - Local Welfare Provision. Proactive Support -Families and young people: Birmingham Children's Trust for tangible &amp; essential items. -Housing support: temporary accommodation and homelessness support. -Adults with special needs: carers, home care, hospital discharge. -Warm Welcome support: Over 300 Warm Welcome spaces set up and provided with grant payments, communications support, retro fits and digital upgrades, and open innovation advice and networking. -Food System Support: Over 170 foodbanks, pantries, youth centres and free school meals. -Energy Support: voucher schemes, advice services Information, advice and guidance -Extended Advice Services: expanding benefits advice, and the Cost-of-Living Helpline. Phase 2 and Phase 3 As part of Phase 2 and Phase 3, the second objective was to support vulnerable individuals and families to become more financially resilient so that they are better able to weather future crises of this nature. The Council's longer-term ambition is to create greater economic inclusion by linking Household Support measures to employment and economic opportunity. The intention is to reduce poverty rates, and the number of households in crisis. Furthermore, the programme aims to create even more opportunity to collaborate and leverage support from partners, making the most efficient overall use of resources, as well as to engage in multi-faceted delivery. The programme has therefore adapted its response and is now also focusing on long-term sustainability whilst still providing short term crisis measures. The initiative continues to engage with a number of services throughout the wider council, both supporting corporate strategy as well as acting as a central mechanism for cross-programme work and collaboration. An example of this is new digital tooling to create more access to benefits</p>

	advice through the use of AI. (The team have been directed to relevant guidance on AI on the Equality and Human Rights Commission's website.) As we move into Phase 4, we will continue to deliver critical support for Birmingham residents and embed some core philosophies such as: - Scale, sustainability & resilience - Identifying opportunities for driving efficiencies within the core supported initiatives: Warm Welcome, Energy, Food, Furniture & Clothing Poverty and Advice Services. - Using data and insights - Enabling efficient and universal resident self-serve offers - Prevention at the core - embedding benefits and income maximisation and employment support into BCC's crisis response. -Integration & collaboration across BCC - continue to encourage the engagement of representatives from EI&P, Childrens & Families, Public Health, ASC and other services.
In support of:	["Amended/refreshed strategy ", "Amended service"]
Reviewing Frequency:	Annually
First review date:	18/03/2026

## Directorate, Division & Service Area

Directorates:	["Corporate Services"]
Division:	Corporate Services
Service Area:	Cost of Living Programme

## Budget Savings

Related to budget savings?:	
Budget proposal reference number:	

## Officers

Responsible Officer Email:	Greg.ward@Birmingham.gov.uk
Accountable Officer Email:	Richard.brooks@birmingham.gov.uk

## Data Sources

Data sources:	["Quantitative data (please specify in the box below)", "Birmingham City Observatory data and insight", "Relevant reports/strategies", "Relevant research"]
Data sources Details:	As part of the requirements set out by the Department for Work and Pensions for the Household Support Fund, the programme completes quarterly MI Returns for each intervention. These returns report on spend, volumes and no. of households helped in relation to household composition, support type (inc. vouchers, cash support and advice services), support category (inc. food, water and energy related, wider essentials, housing costs and advice services) and access routes (application based, proactive and other forms). In addition to this, the programme encourages leads to bring updates to the Strategic Response Group to add further context and detail, both quantitative and qualitative, to the outcomes reported in their MIs. Further, the

	<p>programme management team meets weekly with BVSC, who lead on the Hardship Grant Scheme, to update on the data they have collected. This includes information on localities, ethnicity, gender, cohorts (inc. cross cohorts) and support categories. Using this data, we can see where the highest demand for hardship grants is and which groups may not be accessing the support. In addition to the above data sources, the team continue to work closely with the City Observatory to use their data available to inform decision making and are jointly partnering with Birmingham City University to lead on a whole programme evaluation. The evaluation aims to identify the successes and lessons learned from the implementation of the Household Support Fund and inform on future strategy.</p>
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## Initial Assessment

Impact Age:	Yes
Impact Disability:	Yes
Impact Sex:	Yes
Impact Gender Reassignment:	Yes
Impact Marriage and Civil Partnerships:	Yes
Impact Pregnancy and Maternity:	Yes
Impact Race:	Yes
Impact Religion or Beliefs:	Yes
Impact Sexual Orientation:	Yes
Impact Care Experience:	

## Initial Assessment Summary

Initial Assessment Summary:	<p>Through the Cost-of-Living Programme, the Household Support Fund will continue to provide support to residents in crisis. It recognises that the Cost-of-Living crisis has had increasing negative impacts on certain groups within Birmingham. In response to this, it will continue to utilise data available and the knowledge of its partners to support interventions that target the most vulnerable.</p>
Is a full EIA Required?:	Yes

## Protected Characteristic – Age

Impact Age:	Yes
Age Group Impacted:	["90 years or over", "80-89 years", "70-79 years", "60-69 years", "50-59 years", "40-49 years", "30-39 years", "20-29 years", "10-19 years", "0-9 years"]
Age Impact Details:	<p>Through the Cost of Living Programme, the Household Support Fund will include ongoing and developing activity that includes targeted actions to support vulnerable people across Birmingham across all age categories. These interventions, which go beyond the assistance available to all residents regardless of age, include: - Ongoing Hardship Grant Support led by</p>

	<p>BVSC. This financial year (as of Jan 25) this intervention provided grants of £250 to 666 Pensioners, 14,502 people with disabilities, 10,052 people with children and 4,781 other vulnerable individuals. The flexibility of a cash grant allows residents to use it when they most require the support such as on paying energy bills or rent, food and wider essentials. - Continued support and engagement with the Birmingham Children's Trust to support children and young people including care leavers, children impacted by NRPF and children living in temporary accommodation. - The Warm Welcome and Food Bank Networks will continue to provide support Birmingham Citizens from all age categories to combat food and energy insecurities and reduce the impacts of isolation. Further, some organisations within the Warm Welcome Network will continue to work with organisations such as Inspire Fitness and Art Therapies UK to encourage support with both physical and mental health. - A Furniture and Clothing Poverty group has been developed in partnership with Thrive, BVSC, Spitfire, Birmingham Playcare Network, JERICHO and the Rubery Swop Shop to provide tangible items support to vulnerable residents. Some examples of the work within this group includes: over 900 bed packages provided to families via the BVSC Dream Team bed project and the Birmingham PlayCare Network and over 500 families supported with school uniform packages through the Rubery Swop Shop. -Citizen can access support on income and benefits maximisation along with other support through the Cost of Living Contact Centre and NAIS. In addition to the above, there is high unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, among the working age population of Birmingham, as well as a low employment rate. To that end, through a combination of former LEP monies and the Household Support Fund, an employment infrastructure has been set up to help financially vulnerable citizens, particularly young people, to find employment. Working in partnership with the Cost-of-Living programme, the Income Through Maximisation Programme (IMTEP) focuses on the most economically deprived households in Birmingham. Provide training, advice, equipment and access to fair employment opportunities to 3,500 citizens across the city. The IMTEP programme includes 6 strands: Placing Vulnerable Urban Residents into Employment (PURE), Digital Inclusion, Real living Wage, ICan, Partnerships for People &amp; Place (PfPP) and Youth Employment &amp; Apprentice Support. A Pensioner Credit Campaign pilot is in development. The aim of this pilot campaign is to identify a cohort of vulnerable residents who may be eligible for pension credits, increase the awareness and uptake of pension credits among those eligible and to identify what other support they may need. The programme is supporting a proposal (in Cabinet process) to auto-enrol Free School Meals (FSM). The objective of this proposal will be to identify unregistered children who may be eligible for FSM, and automatically enrolls them for the same. In Birmingham, data that now is in the process of being refreshed suggests as many as 2,000 children may be eligible but not receiving FSMs. It should be noted that this is an early estimate that needs to be treated with some caution. It is therefore anticipated that the auto-enrolment of FSM proposal will have a direct positive impact on eligible children aged between 5 and 16 years old not currently receiving FSMs.</p>
Age Impact Mitigation:	<p>The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches vulnerable citizens across all age categories.</p>

## Protected Characteristic – Disability

Impact Disability:	Yes
Disability Impact Details:	<p>Support in Round 7 of the Household Support Fund will be provided through a number of avenues including: - Ongoing Hardship Grant Support led by BVSC. This financial year (as of Jan 25) the scheme has supported 14,502 people with disabilities with a grant of £250. The flexibility of a cash grant allows residents to use it when they most require the support such as on paying energy bills or rent to alleviate financial pressures while also being signposted to other support mechanisms they may qualify for such as support on benefits and income maximisation. - Support to people with complex intersecting needs through JERICHO, who encourage their clients to become fulfilled, skilled and employed by offering supported work placements in their seven social enterprises. In addition to this, JERICHO provide vouchers to their ReUsers store, their Miracle Laundry and meal via ChangeKitchen. - A number of the</p>

	<p>Warm Welcomes and Food Banks within the Cost of Living networks provide accessibility infrastructure. These are listed on the Warm Welcome directory and the Food Justice Network website. -The funding is being used to provide income maximisation related Information Advice and Guidance. Further to the above, the work by PURE, in partnering programme IMTEP is focused on helping citizens (18+) who face barriers that make it hard to find employment. PURE is now in it's third phase and has worked with over 5,000 people in Birmingham. In addition to an expo, held in December 24, focused on bringing together 500 people with barriers towards education with 70 organisations, PURE will also hold jobs fayres, Council-wide roadshows and further expos.</p>
Disability Impact Mitigation:	<p>The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches vulnerable citizens with disabilities. Further, a proactive approach to the provision of benefits maximisation is being taken, to help avoid a reliance on client walk-ins, and to extend reach to those who find engagement out-with the home difficult, due to caring responsibilities and other issues.</p>

## Protected Characteristic – Sex

Impact Sex:	Yes
Sex Groups Impacted:	
Sex Impact Details:	<p>Household Support Fund, Round 7, interventions are accessible to all genders with a commitment to addressing their personalised support needs and applying a holistic approach to their wellbeing. Additional support, through Birmingham and Solihull Woman's Aid and Birmingham Settlement, will be provided to support individuals who are at risk of or impacted by domestic abuse. Currently, this intervention supports DA survivors with a £300 grant and has commissioned two advisors who provide 1:1 sessions looking at preventing further crisis. This support will be provided by referral for those with the most complex financial needs. This provision has enabled individuals impacted by domestic violence to purchase additional safety measures for their homes such as security systems (not covered by other DA support mechanisms) and covering the cost for a hotel or travel while waiting for accomodation support.</p>
Sex Impact Mitigation:	<p>The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches vulnerable citizens across all sex categories.</p>

## Protected Characteristic – Gender Reassignment

Impact Gender Reassignment:	No
Gender Reassignment Impact Details:	<p>The Household Support Fund Round 7 interventions are accessible to all genders with a commitment to addressing their personalised support needs and applying a holistic approach to their wellbeing. The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of</p>

	this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches vulnerable citizens including those who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process to reassign their sex.
Gender Reassignment Impact Mitigation:	

## Protected Characteristic – Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact Marriage and Civil Partnership:	Yes
Marriage and Civil Partnership Groups Impacted:	["Single","Never married and never registered a civil partnership","Married: Same sex","Married: Opposite sex","In a registered civil partnership: Opposite sex","In a registered civil partnership: Same sex","Separated, but still married","Separated, but still in a registered civil partnership","Divorced","Formerly in a civil partnership now legally dissolved","Widowed","Surviving partner from civil partnership"]
Marriage and Civil Partnership Impact Details:	Citizens will be able to access the Household Support Fund through through the wider provision of the Cost of Living Programme, including the BVSC: Hardship Grant Scheme, the Warm Welcome and Food Bank Networks, the Furniture and Poverty Clothing Group and benefits and income maximisation through advice services. Additional support, through Birmingham and Solihull Woman's Aid and Birmingham Settlement, will be provided to support individuals who are at risk of or impacted by domestic abuse. Currently, this intervention supports DA survivors with a £300 grant and has commissioned two advisors who provide 1:1 sessions looking at preventing further crisis. This support will be provided by referral for those with the most complex financial needs. This provision has enabled individuals impacted by domestic violence to purchase additional safety measures for their homes such as security systems (not covered by other DA support mechanisms) and covering the cost for a hotel or travel while waiting for accomodation support.
Marriage and Civil Partnership Impact Mitigation:	The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches at risk citizens.

## Protected Characteristic – Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact Pregnancy and Maternity:	Yes
Pregnancy and Maternity Impact Details:	Citizens will be able to access the Household Support Fund through the wider provision of the Cost of Living Programme, including the BVSC: Hardship Grant Scheme and benefits and income maximisation through advice services. Further, vulnerable residents within this cohort will be able to access the Food Bank and Warm Welcome network, who hold bespoke activities such as Stay and Plays, and will continue to be supported through the Furniture and Clothing Poverty group including provision through the Birmingham PlayCare Network who provide cots, Moses baskets and other essential items for families. Yes

Pregnancy and Maternity Impact Mitigation:	A proactive approach is being taken, to help avoid a reliance on client walk-ins, and to extend reach to those who find engagement out-with the home difficult, due to caring responsibilities and other issues. In addition to the above, the Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches this cohort.
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## Protected Characteristic – Ethnicity and Race

Impact Ethnicity and Race:	Yes
Ethnicity and Race Groups Impacted:	
Ethnicity and Race Impact Details:	The cost-of-living crisis has significantly impacted those already living in poverty. Within Birmingham there is a concentration of poverty amongst certain ethnic groups, including the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, and those impacted by multiple disadvantage. These residents will be able to access the Household Support Fund through the wider provision of the Cost of Living Programme, including the BVSC: Hardship Grant Scheme (integrating tooling to overcome language barriers), the Warm Welcome and Food Bank Networks, the Furniture and Poverty Clothing Group and benefits and income maximisation through advice services. Round 7 of the Household Support Fund will continue to provide support for Hardship Grants and advice on benefits and income maximisation to those communities in greatest need across Birmingham. In addition to this, through the Household Support Fund, the Refugee and Migrant Centre has run a pilot that focuses support on disadvantaged groups amongst a diverse number of ethnicities including: Employment Support and Economic Integration through: - ESOL classes to enhance language and employability skills - Training to include CV writing and interview preparation - Signposting broadens job opportunities, Improve access to advice services and community care: - To ensure timely healthcare access and education integration - Prevent homelessness and promotes stable housing. Enhance Mental Health and Wellbeing by: - Addressing immediate mental/physical health needs. - Building a network for mental health support. RMC provides additional support including supporting Welfare Benefit applications, energy-saving advice and food voucher referrals.
Ethnicity and Race Impact Mitigation:	The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches this vulnerable citizens amongst the most impacted ethnic groups.

## Protected Characteristic – Religion

Impact Religion:	No
Religion Groups Impacted:	

Religion Impact Details:	Data provided by the Council's Data Observatory will be used to highlight areas of the city where there are so-called "deserts of service provision". These include parts of East Birmingham where there is a high percentage of people from the city's Muslim community. Work is ongoing to consider alternative routes to engaging with this community, in recognition of the limited effectiveness of the current somewhat transactional approach. Further, the Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches the most vulnerable citizens.
Religion Impact Mitigation:	

## Protected Characteristic – Sexual Orientation

Impact Sexual Orientation:	No
Sexual Orientation Groups Impacted:	
Sexual Orientation Impact Details:	Sexual orientation will not be a barrier when accessing the services provided through the Cost of Living Programme, including elements of the enhancement of employment and enterprise opportunities for the most vulnerable communities in Birmingham, support to combat food and energy insecurities, through the Warm Welcome & Food Bank networks and Groundworks Green Doctor programme, tailored provision through the Furniture and Clothing Poverty Group and provide income maximisation related information, advice and guidance. Further, the Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches the most vulnerable citizens.
Sexual Orientation Impact Mitigation:	

## Protected Characteristic – Care Experience

Impact Care Experience:	Yes
Care Experience Impact Details:	
Care Experience Impact Mitigation:	The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and

	Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches vulnerable carers and care leavers.
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## Other

Any other risks or impacts:	In addition to the other categories discussed, there is high unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, among the working age population of Birmingham, as well as a low employment rate. To that end, through a combination of former LEP monies and the Household Support Fund, an employment infrastructure has been set up to help financially vulnerable citizens, particularly young people, to find employment. The IMTEP programme has seven strands of activity, within which there are over 20 individual projects across three directorates: Adult Social Care, Place, Prosperity & Sustainability; and Children & Families. Activity includes: The ICan Programme, Youth Employment and Apprentice Support, Digital Inclusion, Procurement and Social Values, Living Wage and Placing Vulnerable Urban Adults into Employment.
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## Full Assessment Summary

Full Assessment Summary:	There are no negative impacts identified. The Cost-of-Living programme will continue to work cross-directorate, in partnership with multiple organisation across Birmingham to ensure that provision through the Household Support Fund is accessible to disadvantaged groups. It will continue to engage with representatives in the Strategic Response group to ensure the fund is utilised in an impactful way.
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## Monitoring

Monitoring Details:	Working closely with the City Observatory the programme has developed a dashboard of impacts and the coverage of local communities. We will continue to refine this tool and to review the results so that we address any adverse impacts. The Strategic Response Group, where Delegated Authority is placed, will continue to oversee proposals and intervention progress, with critical engagement from colleagues representing Public Health, Children and Families, City Housing, Early Intervention and Prevention, Adult Social Care, IMTEP, Birmingham Children's Trust and Strategy and Communications. This engagement of this group ensures that the Household Support Fund reaches the most disadvantaged groups.
Monitoring Officer Email:	Antonia.Benison@birmingham.gov.uk

