



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**

Peter Schofield CB
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Sir Stephen Timms
Chair, Work and Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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Sent electronically

16 April 2024

Dear Stephen

**ACCESS TO HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND FOR THOSE WITH NO RECOURSE
TO PUBLIC FUNDS**

Thank you for your letter of 25 March concerning the guidance for the Household Support Fund (HSF), specifically for those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

As you say, I set out in my letter of 20 October the legal powers and duties to be exercised by local authorities when considering applications to the HSF.

You asked about further guidance to local authorities. I am glad to say that further detail has been added to the guidance for the new round of the HSF. This was made available to local authorities before the start of the new round, and we will publish it on gov.uk in due course. The new guidance sets out that authorities can provide a basic safety net of support to an individual, regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example if:

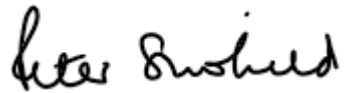
- there are community care needs;
- they have serious health problems; or
- there is a risk to a child's wellbeing.

The guidance also sets out that local authorities must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance. The new guidance further states that the HSF 'does not create new, or restrict existing, local authority powers or duties to support people with No Recourse to Public Funds but provides additional funds which

local authorities can use on a case-by-case basis for expenditure on their existing powers and duties (where the support also falls within the scope of The Fund).'

I hope that this additional detail will help clarify the position for local authorities when considering making an HSF award.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Schofield'.

Peter Schofield CB
Permanent Secretary



Work and Pensions Committee

25 March 2024

Peter Schofield CB

Permanent Secretary
Department for Work and Pensions
(By e-mail only)

Dear Peter,

Access to the Household Support Fund for people with No Recourse to Public Funds

In our November 2023 Report, [Cost of living support payments](#), we highlighted concerns that some people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) could be denied access to the Household Support Fund (HSF), despite being eligible, due to a lack of clarity in guidance. We therefore recommended that the Government clarify in its HSF guidance the circumstances where a local authority could use the HSF to support those with NRPF.

The Government said in its [response](#) to our recommendation that various pieces of legislation govern the powers and duties of local authorities, some of which are unavailable to support people with NRPF due to immigration legislation. It concluded that the variety of potential factors influencing a decision “cannot reasonably be captured in central guidance”. This echoed correspondence you sent to the Committee in [October 2023](#), after we sought clarification on the powers that local authorities could use to provide crisis support to people with NRPF.

In Spring Budget 2024, the Government announced it would extend the Household Support Fund, to support the most vulnerable households for a further six months. It must surely be possible to provide more extensive information and guidance on circumstances where a local authority might use the HSF to support people with NRPF than is currently available. I would therefore be grateful if there could be a rethink and the Department provide more detail in its guidance, as we have consistently called for.

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by 17 April 2024. As is usual practice with the Committee’s correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee’s website.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee