

Appendix A



Crisis and Resilience Fund

Slough Borough Council eligibility framework and approach

Version 4 – March 2026

Slough Borough Council – Welfare Services

Review Date: March 2027

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1. Background

1.1 Slough Borough Council has been allocated £2.7 million through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027. The purpose of the Fund is to support low income and vulnerable households experiencing financial shocks, including pressures arising from increased household costs such as energy and essential living expenses.

1.2 The CRF has two national aims:

- to provide timely and effective crisis support to households facing unexpected financial shocks; and
- to strengthen financial resilience, helping individuals and communities better manage future financial pressures.

1.3 These aims reflect the national shift from short-term emergency schemes toward a multiyear, preventative model of local welfare support.

1.4 Local authorities have discretion to design and deliver schemes within the scope of the national guidance. Authorities may provide support directly to residents, issue payments or vouchers, work with voluntary and community sector partners, or invest in services that improve financial resilience. The Council must ensure that expenditure is targeted, proportionate, transparent, and within the allocated budget for the financial year.

1.5 Funding may be used to address immediate essential needs (such as food, utilities, and housing related costs) and to support longer-term resilience, including income maximisation, debt reduction, and access to wider support services. All funding must be utilised within the financial year, and any schemes may be amended, paused or withdrawn if allocations are exhausted

2. Funding Allocation

The Council will allocate its Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) budget in accordance with national guidance and the required outcomes of the scheme. Funding will be distributed across the following areas:

2.1 Crisis Support

- Crisis Payments for residents experiencing financial shock or urgent need, delivered using a cash first approach in line with national guidance.
- Free School Meals (FSM) holiday support, providing £10 per eligible child per week for designated school holiday periods.
- Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Support for households able to demonstrate exceptional financial hardship during the financial year.
- Care Leaver Support for eligible care leavers under 25, to assist with essential living costs including utilities and travel.

2.2 Housing Support

Housing Payments, supporting residents experiencing shortfalls in rent costs, delivered in accordance with the Council's Housing Fund Policy and replacing Discretionary Housing Payments from 1 April 2026.

2.3 Community and Resilience Support

- Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) Grants of up to £20,000 per organisation, supporting provision of essential items and services that improve financial resilience.
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Support, enabling delivery of family and child focused activities during school holidays.

2.4 Administration

A proportion of funding will be allocated to reasonable administrative costs (capped at 10% of total allocation), including software, staffing, and activity required to deliver the scheme effectively and build local financial resilience.

All allocations remain subject to available budgets and may be paused where funds are exhausted.

3. Eligibility & Assessment Framework

3.1 Voluntary and Community groups (VCS) Grant Eligibility

VCS organisations will be eligible to apply for grants, where they meet the following conditions:

- are a registered charity
- voluntary and community groups which are charitable in purpose
- not for profit organisations such as a community interest companies (CIC), Parent and Teacher Associations, residents' associations, with a clear social purpose and constitution
- national charities
- faith groups, with a project that is accessible to the wider Slough Borough Council community
- CICs generating a profit must reinvest it into community work.

3.2 Eligibility for Crisis Payments

Residents may apply for crisis support where they can demonstrate financial hardship and a need for assistance with food, energy, water, or other essential needs in crisis. All applications will be subject to:

- an initial assessment of cause and urgency of need
- a financial assessment using the council's existing assessment process;
- income and assets verification.
- completion of application and submission of all required evidence before a decision can be made

- a review of any steps taken, in the event of a second application, to improve the financial position or reduce the need for crisis intervention. Where no such evidence is provided, any application will be declined although additional onward signposting and support will be made available.

Those previously supported through Household Support Fund are not automatically eligible, and those previously ineligible may now qualify depending on circumstances.

Applications will be limited to available funding and may be paused when budgets are exhausted.

3.3 Eligibility for Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Support

Residents can apply where they can demonstrate exceptional financial hardship and need support with Council Tax payments for the financial year. Applications must be:

- made by the resident themselves or someone appointed to act for them;
- accompanied by full evidence;
- supported through participation in the assessment process.

3.4 Eligibility for Care Leaver Support

Care leavers are eligible where they meet the definition set out in the Children Act 1989 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and where they are owed duties by Slough Borough Council. Care leavers who live in Slough but are owed duties by another authority will be referred back to that authority.

3.5 Eligibility for Housing Fund Support

Support from the Housing Payment fund, will be administered in accordance with Slough's Housing Payment Policy [\[LINK HERE\]](#).

3.6 Frequency of Awards

Households may qualify for a maximum of two grant awards per year, with one grant for the period 1 April 2026 – 30 September 2026 and one grant for the period 1 October 2026 – 31 March 2027.

An award of a grant in one period, does not automatically entitle a resident to a second grant, and evidence will be required of steps taken to mitigate the need for further crisis support to be considered.

4. Application and Assessment Process

4.1 Routes of Application

Residents will be able to apply for Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) support through two routes:

Route 1: Online application form, available for all eligible residents; [\[LINK to online form here\]](#)

Telephone support, enabling residents to receive assisted completion from a trained officer. [\[Phone Number here\]](#)

All applications submitted via either route will be triaged for risk to the household and prioritised accordingly.

4.2 Evidence Requirements

Applications will not be assessed until all required evidence has been submitted.

- ✓ Required evidence may include, but is not limited to:
- ✓ documents to support financial assessment
- ✓ income and asset verification such as bank statements
- ✓ evidence demonstrating the cause and urgency of need as appropriate in the determination of the officer administering the application

Residents are responsible for providing all information requested in full and in a timely manner.

4.3 Assessment and Decision Making

Once a complete application is received, the following standards apply:

Applications will be assessed as soon as possible, with a service standard of 5 working days from receipt of the final required evidence.

Decisions will be based on the Council's existing financial assessment process, ensuring income, outgoings and assets are fully reviewed.

Applicants may receive signposting to additional support where appropriate in addition to, or in place of, a crisis payment.

Where funding cannot cover all applications, complete applications (i.e., where all evidence is supplied) will be determined before those still awaiting information, and in order of receipt. Applications which are unsuccessful, where information is later provided which would result in a positive outcome, may not result in a payment if the funds provided have been exhausted.

4.4 Repeat Applications

A review will be undertaken of any steps taken by the applicant to improve their financial position or reduce future need for crisis intervention, particularly where a second application is made. Where insufficient evidence of such steps is provided, the application will be declined, although appropriate signposting will remain available.

4.5 Funding Limits and Pausing Applications

Applications may be paused or declined where allocated budgets are exhausted. This will include the Housing fund, although support will be maintained where possible, through any other funding streams open to the authority.

Where the CRF allocation for a specific scheme or route is fully committed, the offer will be withdrawn until further funding becomes available.

4.6 No Guarantee of Award

An application is not a guarantee of entitlement or an award. Each case will be assessed against the eligibility framework, available budget, and evidence provided.

5. Wider Support, Financial Resilience and Strategic Context

5.1 Overview

The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) forms part of a wider landscape of local and national support aimed at helping low-income households who face financial shocks and longer-term financial insecurity. The Fund is designed both to provide a safety net for those experiencing financial shock and to invest in building individual and community financial resilience.

5.2 Objectives of Wider Support

The CRF guidance requires local authorities to work toward three national outcomes which shape how the Council designs, delivers, and reviews its local scheme:

- Outcome 1 – Provision of effective crisis support
- Outcome 2 – Improving individual financial resilience
- Outcome 3 – Strengthening the local support landscape
- Outcome 4 – Provision of support with rent costs to replace Discretionary Housing Payments

5.3 Principles Underpinning Wider Support

Support will be delivered in line with the Key Principles outlined in national guidance, including person-centred, needs-based, holistic support, no-wrong-door access, and trauma-informed practice.

5.4 Role of Wider Support and Referral Pathways

The Council connects residents to wider support such as income maximisation, debt advice, employment services, specialist agencies, and local voluntary and community sector partners.

5.5 Ensuring Value for Public Funds

Support is delivered within fixed allocations, using fair, transparent, and defensible decision-making processes.

5.6 Continuous Improvement and Review

The Council will monitor delivery, identify gaps, improve access, evaluate effectiveness, and update this policy in line with governance requirements.

6. Disputes

CRF is not subject to the same right of review as Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and so is not included in any reconsiderations or appeals made against those entitlements.

However, it is important that applicants have a clear understanding of how to dispute a decision they believe is incorrect.

To request a review where an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision, they must write to the Welfare Service within one calendar month of the date of the notification of decision stating that they wish to request a review. This request can be made in writing via post or email to Debtandwelfare@slough.gov.uk

The written request for a review must state the reasons the applicant disagrees with the decision and if necessary, provide any information or evidence to support their case.

The review will be considered by another officer not involved in the first decision. Where no further evidence or information is provided, the review is unlikely to be successful although each case will be considered individually.

The decision will be notified to the applicant and will explain the reasons for either revising the decision and any subsequent conditions relating to the award, or that the decision has remained unchanged and the reasons for this.

There will be no further right to request a review but in cases of alleged maladministration, the applicant may wish to follow the Council's Corporate Complaints process

7. Fraud, Error and Misuse

The Council has a duty to administer the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) responsibly, ensuring that public funds are used only for their intended purpose and reach residents who genuinely meet the eligibility criteria.

To safeguard the Fund, the Council will:

- verify identity, residency and financial information where appropriate
- request evidence required to assess eligibility and need
- cross-check information with internal systems and partner agencies where lawful and necessary
- apply a need based and person-centred approach while ensuring claims are genuine.

Where the Council identifies or suspects fraud, misrepresentation or misuse of the Fund, it may:

- suspend or refuse an application
- stop further payments
- request repayment of any award obtained improperly
- refer the matter to the Council's Corporate Fraud Team
- share information with partner agencies where legally permitted.

Deliberate attempts to obtain support through false statements or omissions may result in refusal of future support, recovery of payments, or further action in line with the Council's fraud policies.

8. Equality, Fairness and the Public Sector Equality Duty

The Council is committed to delivering the Crisis and Resilience Fund in a fair and accessible manner that complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

In line with CRF principles, the Council will ensure services are:

- person-centred
- needs based
- holistic
- accessible through a no wrong door approach
- Trauma informed.

The Council recognises that certain groups may be more likely to experience financial shocks or crisis. The Council will take steps to ensure these groups can access the Fund without disadvantage and use proactive measures available to it, to directly reach out to groups it can identify may be in need of support.

To support equality of access, the Council will:

- provide reasonable adjustments
- support digitally excluded residents
- offer assisted application routes
- monitor applications and outcomes to identify and address potential barriers.

All decisions will be fair, transparent and recorded with clear reasoning, ensuring defensibility to oversight bodies, including the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

9. Review and Amendments

In the event that any amendments to this policy are required — including changes arising from updated government guidance, variations in allocated funding, operational delivery requirements, or adjustments necessary to ensure the effective and lawful administration of the Crisis and Resilience Fund —

authority is delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Children and Lifelong Learning to approve such changes.

10. Data protection and intended use

The Council will collect and process personal information for the purposes of administering Housing Payments under the Crisis and Resilience Fund. This includes assessing eligibility, making payments, preventing and detecting fraud, and integrating support with wider welfare, housing and financial resilience services where appropriate.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information may be shared with relevant internal Council services, the Department for Work and Pensions, landlords, and partner organisations where this is lawful, necessary and proportionate for administering the scheme or meeting statutory duties.

Further information about how personal data is processed, applicants' rights, how long information is retained, and how to raise a concern is set out in the Council's Corporate Privacy Notice, available at:

<https://www.slough.gov.uk/data-protection-foi/privacy-notices/9>