

Supporting our community through the Cost-of-Living crises

Chorley Council's model to support residents through the current cost-of-living crisis has a twin-track approach.

One workstream supports individuals facing acute and immediate challenges with paying for food, general problems with budgeting for essential household expenditure and specific housing costs which could lead to homelessness. This workstream is primarily funded from external grants (Household Support Fund, Affordable Warmth and UKSPF).

The second workstream supports community and voluntary groups to deliver medium-term, community led solutions to help residents. This includes delivering a food-support network, general advice and guidance on a range of issues and delivering an annual Warm Spaces programme across the borough. Funding for these projects tends to be from core Council funds and commissioned via the Communities and Housing Service.

These projects are coordinated through the Cost-of-Living Action Plan which is a corporate project.

Core commissioning to voluntary and community sector

The Community Partnership Team manages budgets and processes to commission both large and small community/voluntary groups to deliver projects supporting residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. Within the core-commissioning work is a specific work stream to support Warm/Welcome Spaces in the community each summer and winter.

2023/24 to 2024/25 spend = £322,000 (2-yr delivery programme)

Citizens Advice	£150,000	general advice services
Homestart	£44,000	support for families
Chorley Buddies	£20,000	specific projects supporting older people
Chorley Buddies	£15,000	food poverty network (food clubs)
Living Waters	£15,000	money advice courses
Chorley Women's Centre	£16,000	advice and support
Release Counselling	£30,000	counselling services
Help the Homeless	£32,000	specialist support for homeless

In 2024/25 we will support approximately 20 "Warm/Welcome Spaces" across the borough to give residents somewhere warm and friendly to come and socialise. After the success from last year's warm spaces programme and the welcome spaces delivered over the summer months, we are working alongside groups and organisations to deliver another warm space offer this winter.

Our Warm Spaces grant fund opened a few weeks ago for applications and the team have been in touch with previous Warm Spaces to let them know and encourage them to apply. Warm Spaces must run at least once a week from November to February and must be available for at

least 1 hour per week. Welcome Spaces offer the same services but are available throughout the summer period. Each session must either provide free, hot refreshments/meal or provide free access to essential household items (energy saving items like draught excluders/energy efficient lightbulbs, cleaning products, sanitary products, childcare products etc). Staff and volunteers will be able to provide signposting to cost-of-living and wellbeing support.

This specific project will be supported by the proceeds of the Avondale Library Trust (report to Trustees on 17th September 2024).

2024/25 spend = £20,000 (1-yr delivery)

Household Support Fund (HSF)

Household Support Fund round 5 closes at the end of September 2024 (April 2024 to September 2024). The message from the government is that there will be a 6-month extension to the scheme (locally, we will call this HSF6). HSF grant is passed to upper-tier authorities who then allocate to lower-tiers. To date the details of HSF6 have not been shared with District Councils (Head of Communities and Housing is attending the county-wide HSF officer group meeting on 19th September to find out more information).

From April to July 2024, over 2,500 households have been supported by HSF5 projects.

2024/25 (HSF5) spend = £310,345 (1-yr delivery)

£169,730	direct payments to residents in-need from community groups (including CAB) for items like supermarket vouchers, discretionary housing payments, essential furniture items.
£40,000	direct payments to residents to support home energy improvements like boiler servicing, insulation improvements, LED lighting (in addition to Affordable Warmth and UKSPF grant).
£36,500	payments to support food clubs/emergency food parcels.
£64,115	payments to advice services and council team to pay for advice around benefits, budgeting and cost-of-living support.

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Affordable Warmth and UKSPF grants

Both grants (Affordable Warmth ended in June 2024, UKSPF runs to the end of March 2025) have been used to provide direct support to residents living in fuel-poverty and/or have identified that their home is not energy efficient.

2024/25 spend = £72,000 (Affordable Warmth) + £68,915 (UKSPF) (1-yr delivery)

By the end of 2025 just over 500 households will have been contacted by the Home Energy Advisor (paid for from a combination of these grants) and offered home energy improvement advice. This includes information about how to reduce energy bills, registration on utility

companies Priority registers, referral for Home Fire Safety assessment, signposting to general advice support and referrals to Adult Social Care for additional care needs support (including Occupational Therapy to trigger use of Disabled Facilities Grant).

Of these 500, over half will also have taken up the offer of free home energy efficiency measures which could be as simple as changing to LED lightbulbs, all the way through to boiler replacement.

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UKSPF: general cost-of-living support

In addition to the specific element of UKSPF to deliver home energy improvements, the grant is also used to provide more general support to residents struggling to cope in the cost-of-living crisis.

2024/25 spend = £37,612 (further £122,185 on projects not directly related to Cost of Living) (1-yr delivery)

£20,000	Chorley Buddies: food poverty network
£21,620	Help the Homeless: specialist support and advice
£25,612	Lancashire MIND: money advice courses/advice
£12,000	St Laurence's Church: food network support

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Holiday and Activity Fund (HAF)

This grant (allocated from LCC) allows delivery of children's activity clubs during school holidays, plus a meal for every child who attends. The programme is focussed on children who receive free school meals because of low household income.

2024 (calendar year) spend = £279,000

Easter holiday	2,113 children attended
Summer holiday	10,000 children attended
Christmas holiday	TBC

Activities undertaken by Jigsaw Homes

Jigsaw Homes will be distributing winter warmer packs which will target those in need and will be open to Chorley residents who are referred in by staff and partners.

In addition to this HACT fuel vouchers are still available for those tenants on Pre paid meters for a, again these are referred through by staff and partners.

Jigsaw's money care team are completing a campaign on Pension Credit awareness and affordability checks are being completed– which has resulted in 50% more referrals to the money care team than last year.

Events Jigsaw Homes will be attending

Event details	Location	Details	Date
Cost of Living event	Duke Street Family Centre	Jigsaw together with partners from DWP, Chorley Council, social prescribers, Christians against poverty, Chorley buddies, Family centre staff – gave out advice and help on the Cost of Living. We gave out hot soup and winter warmer packs along with fresh food market vouchers. Cllrs Roy Lees, Julia Berry and Katie Wilkie attended.	1/10/24
Cost of living event	Coppull Library	As above (Cllrs have an invite)	8/11/24
Warm welcome hub launch	Coppull library	Launch of welcome hub which will provide warm space, hot drinks and food and the option to take part in games and crafts (Cllrs have an invite)	Starting 1 st Nov – open every Friday
Over 60s Christmas meal	Coppull Methodist Church (transport from Buttermere arranged)	Christmas meal, targeting those who may be experiencing isolation and struggling with the cost of living. There will be bingo, quiz, prizes and pressies to take home to unwrap on Christmas day. Those who attend will receive a gesture food pack of cup a soup, tea, coffee, mince pies and fresh food market vouchers.	4/11/24 8/11/24

September 2024