More help is on the way for people who are struggling to pay their food, energy and other related bills.

Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils have opened a voucher scheme to support households who can’t afford to pay for life’s essentials.

The scheme is part of the Government’s Household Support Fund (HSF) which was extended by the chancellor in the recent budget. A portion of funds allocated to Oxfordshire County Council have been allocated to Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils as part of a wider support package across the county, which includes help for children eligible for free school meals through the holidays.

Funding is limited and the scheme is open initially to people who have not had support from it before. However, the councils will open it to second applications if funds remain.

Cllr Helen Pighills, Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities at Vale of White Horse District Council said: “Whether it’s a change in circumstances or the rise in the cost of living that’s causing pressure - we urge people in financial difficulty who have not already received assistance from this fund to apply for the help that’s now available.”

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing at South Oxfordshire District Council said: “Financial issues can affect us at very different times in life. Struggling to afford to pay the bills is a reality for many, and we want residents to access this help for that very reason.”

The funds are not restricted to people in receipt of benefits and there is no requirement that residents must be employed or must be unemployed. In contrast to previous schemes, a portion of the funds will be allocated specifically to support pensioner households.

To find out about the scheme and to complete an application form please visit the councils’ webpages:

* whitehorsedc.gov.uk/household-support-fund
* southoxon.gov.uk/household-support-fund

The scheme will end in September 2022, unless funds are spent sooner.

[Ends]

**Notes to editors:**

**About the Household Support Fund**

The Government launched the £421 million Household Support Fund (HSF) on 6 October 2021 to support households struggling to afford essentials over the winter months as the country continued its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.  In the March 2022 budget, the Government announced a Household Support Fund extension to make a further £421 million available for Local Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with significantly rising living costs. This Household Support Fund Extension covers the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.  
More details are on the Government website:  <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils>

Communications

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

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