

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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COUNCIL AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR HELP HUNDREDS OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH EXTRA SUPPORT OVER WINTER

Together with the local voluntary sector, Wokingham Borough Council has helped hundreds of households through the Household Support Fund since November, with more funding still available until the end of March.

The money has been awarded to all local authorities to help the most vulnerable households cover essential costs in the coming months. The council has distributed the majority (over £300,000) of the £525,573 allocation from Central Government directly to the voluntary sector, ensuring it reaches the people who need it most, and helps them cover essential costs in the coming months. The rest of the funding is being used on food vouchers for families with children eligible for free school meals, to spend through school holiday periods.

The voluntary sector funding is being distributed to residents in need through the One Front Door; a service set-up at the start of the pandemic which is led by Citizens Advice Wokingham in partnership with other local voluntary organisations and Wokingham Borough Council. Funding has commonly covered food, heating, wider essentials, and other costs to meet immediate needs.

Cllr Laura Blumenthal, deputy executive member for anti-poverty, said: “We want everyone who is struggling financially to contact the One Front Door service. It’s friendly, non-judgmental and will offer a helping hand to those who need a little extra help this winter.

“We want to help prevent people facing financial hardship and ensure they are receiving the right support. That’s why we want as many residents as possible to feed back on our Anti-Poverty Strategy, which has been produced in partnership with local charities and is currently out for [consultation](#). We’ll

also be setting up stalls across the Borough to chat to residents about the strategy and encourage them to share their views.”

Below is a recent example of how the One Front Door has supported a local resident:

“We had a call from a client who was struggling financially. They had requested a food parcel and top-ups for electricity and gas as they only had £3 left on their meters. We arranged both for them and signposted them to SHARE Wokingham for further support with food as it is close to where they live. The client wasn’t aware of this facility and was very grateful for the information. We also discussed the Household Support Fund to help with their utilities and put through an application for this. Finally, to make sure they are receiving everything they’re entitled to, we’ve booked in an assessment with them to help them apply for any additional benefits.”

Anyone who is struggling is encouraged to contact the One Front Door initially, so the team can assess their needs and help them find a way forward. This can be done by visiting the One Front Door [website](#), emailing contact@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk, or by phoning 0808 278 7958. The phone lines are open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. The team are working through enquiries as quickly as possible.

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Further information:

1. More from the council’s Communications, Engagement & Marketing team on cem@wokingham.gov.uk