City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Community and Children's Services Committee	**Dated:** 30/06/2026
Subject: Replacing the Emergency Support Scheme with the Crisis Resilience Fund	**Public report:** For Information
This proposal: • **delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes** • **delivers the Crisis Resilience Fund offer to City of London residents**	**Providing Excellent Services**
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	Funded by government as part of the Crisis Resilience Fund and existing Emergency Support Scheme budget
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Phil Black, Assistant Director - Financial Shared Services
Report author:	Jacqui McKeating, Council Tax and Benefits Manager

Summary

Since April 2013 the London Borough of Lambeth have administered the Emergency Support Scheme on behalf of the CoL. The scheme is open to City residents and those living in temporary accommodation who are offered permanent accommodation in a CoL property.

The Emergency Support scheme was aimed at supporting CoL residents facing a crisis, emergency or disaster and who were unable to afford essentials. Additionally homeless households, placed in temporary accommodation by CoL could access help moving into their new home. Eligibility to the scheme was limited to those in

receipt of certain benefits or with a household income under £30,000. Help provided covered some of the cost of essential furniture items, household items, clothing, food, fuel and emergency travel.

More recently the Government has provided further support for the cost of living via the Household Support Fund.

This document reports the end of the contract with the London Borough of Lambeth and provides details of the new inhouse scheme delivered as part of the CoL Crisis Resilience fund offer. This will effectively combine the previous Emergency Support Fund, the Household Support Fund, and Discretionary Housing Payments into one new fund.

Main Report

Background

Emergency Support Scheme

1. The Department of Work and Pensions stopped providing and administering Social Fund Payments in April 2013. Initially DWP provided grant funding to local authorities to provide an alternative to Social Fund Payments but over the years this grant funding stopped.

2. The Emergency Support scheme was created to provide a replacement for the Social Fund Payment scheme which the DWP closed in April 2013. The purpose of the scheme was to provide support to residents experiencing an emergency.

3. At the time most London boroughs had a residency requirement for access to their schemes meaning homeless families in temporary accommodation who were offered out of borough CoL properties would be disadvantaged. The CoL scheme was extended to provide support for these families moving into their new homes.

4. The Emergency Support Scheme was outsourced to the London Borough of Lambeth in 2013 because Lambeth were able to deliver in-kind support, providing goods rather than cash for most awards. The CoL would have had to negotiate a number of contracts with different providers in order to deliver a similar scheme.

5. Outsourcing the scheme to a neighbouring authority was also the most efficient way of delivering the service given the demand on CoL staff time delivering the scheme.

6. In January 2024 Lambeth changed their scheme to deliver support via a company called CashPerks. This delivered cash rather than delivering goods which negated one of the benefits of outsourcing the scheme. It also became evident that CoL was restricted on how it could deploy the scheme as it was tied to the conditions of the Lambeth scheme.

7. In recent years the administration cost paid to Lambeth have also increased meaning the current provision is no longer as cost effective. Coupled with the change in the Government approach this is an opportune moment to review how CoL delivers this type of support to residents.

Household Support Fund

8. As part of its response to the cost of living crisis, the government created the Household Support Fund in October 2021.

    - Funding was provided in seven tranches.
    - No tranche was for more than 12 months.
    - Local authorities were reimbursed for their awards at the end of the tranche period.
    - Requirements for each tranche were often provided close to the start of that spending period making it difficult to plan an effective use of the funds.

Crisis Resilience Fund

9. The government has now replaced the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments with the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) from April 2026 until March 2029.

10. Funding will be provided to local authorities each month as part of the settlement grant.

11. Discretionary Housing Payments will now be called Housing Payments and will be delivered under the same rules and in the same manner as previously.

12. Funding for Housing Payments is ringfenced and set at the same level as 2025-26 for the next two financial years, £13,111, reducing to £9000 for 2028-29 financial year. This funding has previously been provided separately to the Household Support Fund.

13. Although the Crisis Resilience Fund award for the City is £102,582, after deducting the amount for Housing payments, the funding available for the crisis and resilience element of the CRF has reduced from the 2025-26 HSF allocation of £111,177 to £87,179.

City of London Crisis and Emergency Offer from 2026 onwards

14. The new offer which will combine the Crisis Resilience Fund for CoL residents and roll out a separate "**help with moving"** offer for clients in temporary accommodation.

15. The new scheme will be delivered using an online portal called Apply4Onine. This portal has already been used to deliver support to businesses during Covid and is currently used by Council Tax and Business Rates teams to deliver online applications. There is no additional cost for using this service.

16. The intention is that CoL staff in Financial Shared Service Division and C&CS will administer the scheme.

17. Residents who meet the qualifying criteria will be offered one or more of the following:
    1. Crisis help via CashPerks or food vouchers
    2. Help paying utility or heating costs – direct payment to the utility provider
    3. Help towards the cost of household items via payments direct to bank accounts
    4. Some household items may be purchased directly if required

18. CoL clients in temporary accommodation will be offered help towards the cost of household items via payments direct to bank accounts. The decision to award these cases will rest with the Homelessness Team.

19. As part of the prevention element of the scheme funding will be provided for the following:
    - Food Club
    - Forgetmenot Club
    - Children's Social Care Early Help team to provide practical support to prevent a family falling into crisis
    - School Uniform grants to support those in receipt of Universal Credit but not eligible for the current scheme.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

20. The Crisis Resilience Fund aligns with the Corporate Plan 2024–29 outcome of *Providing Excellent Services* by maintaining and strengthening the City's offer to residents facing financial hardship or crisis. The consolidation of the Emergency Support Scheme and the Crisis Resilience Fund into a single in-house scheme improves coherence and responsiveness. The scheme also supports *Diverse Engaged Communities* by providing targeted assistance to

vulnerable residents, including homeless households being resettled into City properties.

Resource implications

21. The scheme will be administered in-house by staff in the Financial Shared Services Division and Community and Children's Services. Staff already administer the utility bill element of the Household Support Fund and anticipate the additional work taking no more than one to two hours of officer time each week. The report author manages the team and agrees with this approach. Any unexpected strain on staff resources will be mitigated by ongoing work to improve efficiencies within the team. No additional resources are required.

22. The Apply4Online portal is already in use by Council Tax and Business Rates teams. There is no requirement for additional procurement.

23. A review of the Emergency Support Scheme budget (£25,000) will be undertaken once the new scheme has bedded in.

Financial Impact

24. The new scheme will be funded from the £102,582 government award. Whilst this represents a reduction in overall funding it is expected that this will be sufficient to meet the requirements of the scheme.

25. The current Emergency Support Scheme budget of £25,000 will be used to support those in temporary accommodation who are located outside of the City and are moving into CoL permanent homes. A review of this budget will be undertaken once the scheme has bedded in.

Legal implications

26. The Crisis Resilience Fund is a government-funded scheme with specific conditions of use set by Department of Work and Pensions. The City's delivery of the scheme must comply with the relevant grant conditions and any associated guidance. The transition from the Lambeth-administered scheme requires formal contractual closure of the existing outsourcing arrangement, however Lambeth have no objections to the contract ending.

Risk implications

27. Key risks include:
    - lower funding envelope compared to previous years — the available crisis/resilience element has reduced from £111,177 to £87,179 — which may create unmet demand if need exceeds allocation

- staff capacity and capability to administer an in-house scheme for the first time
- the scheme going live without adequate resident awareness, resulting in eligible residents not accessing support.

28. Mitigations include
    - Settling a lower limit on maximum award amounts to reflect lower budget
    - use of the existing Apply4Online platform
    - staff familiarisation and experience delivering Household Support Fund and Test and Trace scheme during Covid
    - planned postal mailout with City Living Newsletter in August/September to all residents to ensure residents are aware of the support available even if digitally excluded
    - a review clause once the scheme has bedded in

Equalities implications

29. The new scheme continues to serve the same eligible groups as the previous scheme, including residents in financial hardship, those in temporary accommodation, families with children, and households in receipt of Universal Credit.

30. The online portal delivery model (Apply4Online) will be assessed for accessibility, particularly for residents with disabilities or limited digital access and updated as needed.

31. Alternative application routes will be available where needed. Telephone and email contact details for the Benefits Team will be included on the website to facilitate this.

Climate implications

32. No material climate implications identified.

Security implications

33. The Apply4Online portal is already in use within the City for Council Tax and Business Rates applications and has an established security framework.

Conclusion

34. Replacing the existing Emergency Support Scheme will enable the provision of a better service for City residents with the City having greater control over the scheme allowing for a better response to emerging needs.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None

Jacqui McKeating

Council Tax and Benefits Manager

T: 020 3834 7180

E: Jacqui.mckeating@cityoflondon.gov.uk