

19 December 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

## Cost of Living Support

We know that everyone is feeling the pinch this winter, and we want to support those families in our school community who are impacted the most. This letter will help signpost what help and support is available to you and your family as the cost of living crisis continues to bite. If you are struggling with your finances, the information below will be useful. We want to do everything we can to help you and your child through this difficult winter.

### Contact Your Local Citizen's Advice Bureau or Family Services

#### CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU (CAB)

You do not have to be a UK citizen to get support from your local CAB; you just need to be a resident of the local area. The CAB can help you with:

- Getting benefits or other financial support organised
- Accessing support for essential costs (food, bills, rent)

Visit the [Citizens Advice Bureau's website](#) at or contact your local branch to book an appointment:

Feltham Citizens Advice 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, The Centre High Street, Feltham TW13 4GU 0808 278 7830	Brentford & Chiswick Citizens Advice Town Hall Heathfield Terrace Chiswick W4 4JN 0808 278 7830
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#### HOUNSLOW FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTORY

Hounslow's [Family Service Directory](#) is information and support for families with children and young people and will enable you to access the support you may need.

### Check You Are Paying the Right Amount Of Tax

If you are in work, it is important to make sure you are on the right tax code. If you are not, you might be due a refund. Use the MoneySavingExpert's [free tax code calculator](#).

### Claim Any Benefits to Which You Are Entitled

Use one of these benefits calculators to determine whether there are any benefits you could be claiming:

- [Turn2us](#)
- [Policy in Practice](#)
- [Support for migrant families](#) - use this calculator if you are a migrant family, or if you have no recourse to public funds

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You may be able to get benefits paid early if you are already feeling the squeeze - this is known as 'a short-term benefit advance'. You will need to contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) universal credit line on 0800 328 5644.

### **Check You Have Received All the Government's Cost of Living Payments**

The government's cost of living payment is available for those receiving certain benefits or tax credits. You do not need to apply for these - if you are eligible, the money should go straight into your account. If you think you are due a payment, but have not received one - [report a missing payment to the government](#).

**Be aware of scams!** If you receive any emails, texts or phone calls asking you to fill in an application form or asking for your bank details to receive a cost of living payment, **do not talk to them or send a reply**. Get more information on cost of living scams from the [MoneySavingExpert](#).

### **Find Out What Help You Can Get with Your Energy Bills**

If you get benefits, you may be eligible to get £150 off your electricity bill or £150 added to your pre-payment meter through the Warm Home Discount scheme. You do not need to apply for the scheme - payments are usually automatic - but the best way to find out is to speak to your energy supplier.

In some circumstances, people who are unable to afford to top up their pre-payment meters may be able to get a fuel voucher. You must be referred to the [Fuel Bank Foundation](#) to receive this voucher. If you are unable to top up your pre-payment meter, [speak to somebody at school](#), and they will organise for you to be referred.

If you are in debt to your energy supplier, you might be able to get a grant to help pay it off. You can contact your supplier directly to see if there is any support that they can offer. If you are unable to get a grant from your supplier, look at the [British Gas Energy Trust website](#). They make grants available to anyone - you do not have to be a British Gas customer.

### **Ensure You Are Accessing Free School Meals (FSM)**

If you claim one of the following benefits, your child is eligible for free school meals (FSM):

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit and have an annual income of no more than £7,400
- Child Tax Credit, but not entitled to a Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by the Inland Revenue) of no more than £16,190
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- or are being supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

If you claim one of the above benefits and your child is not getting FSM, you can apply on [the London Borough of Hounslow's \(LBH\) website](#).

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## Help for School Uniform Costs

Parents/carers can apply for help with school uniform costs. The [School Uniform Grant](#) is available to primary pupils from Reception to Year 6 and secondary pupils in Years 7 and 9. The grant amount for secondary pupils is £60 and for primary pupils is £15. Learn more and apply at the above link.

## See What Other Support You Can Get from Your Local Authority

The London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) has several things in place to support everyone through the current cost of living crisis.

### WARM SPACES

From October 2022 until March 2023, [warm spaces](#) will be offered across the borough so that people who are struggling to heat their homes have somewhere warm to go. The warm spaces will initially be opened in all the borough's 11 libraries; you will be offered a hot drink and somewhere to relax. There is also free Wi-Fi available.

### HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT GRANT

LBH currently has funding for the [Household Support Grant](#). This provides households with payments to help with essentials such as food and utilities. The funding is available from October 2022 to March 2023 and to qualify:

- You do not need to be in receipt of benefits. This grant is available to anyone who is on a low income.
- You will need to provide proof of your utility bills showing that you are in arrears with your payments.
- If you are struggling to pay for food, you need to explain why you are unable to manage on the income you have.

You can apply for the Household Support Grant at the link above.

### DISCRETIONARY LOCAL CRISIS PAYMENTS

LBH also offer [Discretionary Local Crisis Payments \(DLCP\)](#). This scheme is in place to:

- Help households to establish themselves in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care.
- Help households remain in the community instead of entering institutional or residential care.
- Ease exceptional pressures and stress on households.
- Avoid serious risk to health and safety where it may be prevented.

If you have any queries, you can call 0208 583 2000. You can apply at the link above.

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## FURTHER ADVICE

The LBH website offers [more advice](#), such as:

- Tips on saving money and managing your budget
- Help with housing and homelessness support
- Help with energy costs
- Reducing food costs
- Help if you are in immediate financial difficulties
- Help finding work

## Get Free or Low-Cost Food

If you are worried about not having enough food to feed your family, you are not alone. There are several places across the borough offering support.

- At school, we offer free porridge to **all** students from 8.00 - 8.20am each day in the school Dining Rooms.
- If you have a child under 4, and meet the eligibility criteria, you may be entitled to [Healthy Start Food Vouchers](#).
- There are [foodbanks across the borough](#) - if you are running low on money or food, we are happy to make a referral for you. Just [speak to a member of staff](#) who will organise this for you.
- You can also access [free meals from several different services](#) in Hounslow.
- [Asda Café](#) are offering the following:
  - free Ella Baby products
  - Kids under 16 eat for £1
  - £1 soup and bread for over 60s
- Food waste apps and websites like:
  - Olio (for free food and household items from your local community)
  - Too Good to Go (for low cost food from local restaurants)
  - Low Price Foods (food that has passed its best before date but is still safe to consume).

## Further information

- The [Mayor of London](#) has a range of useful advice, including how to increase your income, stay warm and finding various support networks.
- Contact [StepChange](#), if you are struggling with debt.
- Contact [Shelter](#) if you have issues related to housing.
- Contact [End Furniture Poverty](#) for help with furniture.
- Get free household goods on [Freecycle](#).
- See if you are eligible for grants from [Turn2us](#).
- Single parents can get support from [Gingerbread](#).
- Apply to [Family Fund](#) for grants if you are raising a disabled or seriously ill child and need support with essential items.
- Contact the [Salvation Army](#) for emergency assistance.

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- Get referred to the [BBC Children in Need Emergency Essentials Programme](#) by a professional for items that meet a child's basic needs ([speak to a member of staff](#) if you feel you may need a referral).
- Get referred to [Glasspool Charity Trust](#) by a professional for grants for essential household items and clothing for individuals, couples and families ([speak to a member of staff](#) if you feel you may need a referral).

Yours faithfully,



**Simon Fisher**  
Co-Headteacher



**Jo Higginbottom**  
Co-Headteacher

