

Extension to the Household Support Fund

I have received the below letter from the Government Minister for Welfare delivery regarding the Household Support Fund which I would like to share:

Dear Colleague,

EXTENSION TO THE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

Our new Way to Work campaign aims to get half a million people who are out of work into jobs in the next four months. It will support employers who need to fill their vacancies, whilst also helping claimants by improving their financial situation. Alongside this initiative, we have announced around £400 billion since the start of the pandemic protecting jobs and incomes.

The economy is in recovery, with a record number of people on the payroll, but we recognise the inflationary challenges and that people are concerned about pressure on household budgets. That is why we are extending the Household Support Fund to provide cost of living support for households most in need, shifting the focus of the fund to include more of those people who cannot work. From April, the government is providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials. This brings the total funding for this support to £1 billion. In England, £421 million will be provided to extend the existing Household Support Fund from 1 April to 30 September inclusive. The devolved administrations will receive £79 million through the Barnett formula. In England, the allocation for Councils is the same as for the previous 6 months.

In England, the fund will be distributed via upper-tier Local Authorities. This support will continue to help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other essentials, to prevent the escalation of problems. We know energy bills may be of particular concern to low income households and so Local Authorities are being encouraged to focus on supporting households with the cost of energy.

At least a third of the extension funding (£140m) will be spent on pensioners on low incomes and at least another third (£140m) will be spent on families with children.

This will ensure that the most vulnerable, including those unable to work to boost their income, will continue to receive vital support to help with the costs of household essentials throughout the next six months.

This extension is just one way that we are helping families with the rising cost of living and other global inflationary pressures. The government has recently announced a three-part plan of support to help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1 billion in 2022-23. This includes a £200 discount on energy bills this Autumn for all domestic electricity customers

in Great Britain, to be paid back automatically over the next 5 years. This also includes a £150 non-repayable rebate in Council Tax bills for all households in bands A-D in England, as well as a £144 million discretionary fund for Local Authorities to support households who are in need regardless of their council tax band.

We continue our focus on getting people into work. The National Living Wage will increase to £9.50 an hour this April, providing an extra £1000 pay for a full-time worker. This has risen every year since it was introduced in 2016. The cuts to the Universal Credit taper rate and the uplift to the work allowances will also put, on average, an extra £1,000 a year into the pockets of 1.7 million low-income families.

These initiatives, alongside the Household Support Fund extension, will work to help those most in need over the coming months. For MPs in English constituencies, please direct constituents in need of support to their local authority who will be able to help them access the Household Support Fund. Your Council will be required to produce a plan taking into account the new conditions and guidance. I encourage you to give your thoughts directly to your council leader on how you think their scheme could be improved. For MPs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, I would encourage you to speak to the Devolved Administrations about their plans to use their allocations.

Kind regards,

David Rutley MP
Minister for Welfare Delivery

[My question about the Government's Schools White Paper](#)

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): How will the poorly performing schools get the brilliant teachers and better professional development that the Secretary of State rightly wants, because that is what they need?

Nadhim Zahawi, the Secretary of State for Education: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. We endowed the Education Endowment Foundation when the coalition Government came into office, and I have just announced a further endowment for the next 10 years. It has evidenced the qualifications and quality of teacher training that are required, whether in the early careers framework, initial teacher training or later in life in professional development, and we are following that evidence and scaling up half a million teacher training opportunities. That has never been attempted, certainly in my time in Parliament; it is a huge scale-up of teacher training and that is what we will deliver.

Two written answers from the Department of Health and Social Care

I am continuing my questions to the Health department to highlight the lack of specific costed plans to deal with the waiting lists and quality of service issues that worry people. I am urging the Treasury to make the grant of extra cash conditional on clear plans to deliver more and better service, which in turn will need suitable workforce plans. The answers below confirm there is plenty of management work to be done to set out what additional better service they are promising and how they will spend the extra money they have been granted.

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (146529):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the absence of a manpower and recruitment plan, what steps the NHS takes to forecast its spending needs for the year ahead. (146529)

Tabled on: 24 March 2022

Answer:

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement published the '2022/23 priorities and operational planning guidance' on 24 December 2021. This is supplemented by technical guidance on the associated financial assumptions on which the National Health Service should plan. Individual systems plan spending for the year against allocations in response to this guidance and submit plans to NHS England and NHS Improvement to aggregate into an overall NHS financial plan. We expect the NHS to manage their spend within the overall budget in the Mandate.

The answer was submitted on 29 Mar 2022 at 13:13.

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (146531):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how often he meets the Chief Executive of NHS England to review progress with reducing waiting lists and other matters. (146531)

Tabled on: 24 March 2022

Answer:

Edward Argar:

My Rt hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care meets regularly with the Chief Executive of NHS England to discuss a range of issues, including progress on reducing waiting lists.

The answer was submitted on 29 Mar 2022 at 13:15.

[A new energy policy](#)

The government is offering us a new energy policy. It wants a new long term plan for its aim of getting to net zero by 2050, and a shorter term plan for the current decade to keep the lights on and to provide affordable energy as we await the technologies and investments in a greener future.

The government is likely to back substantial increases in nuclear provision for after 2030. By 2030 nuclear output will be well down following the closure of most of the existing fleet of stations, with only one major new opening. It will need a big rate of build to turn this round for the 2030s. The government will also favour more wind generation. This can only work if at the same time the government and the market invest in storage and usage technologies that overcomes the intermittent nature of wind power. This week wind has been as low as 1% of our electricity generated, leaving us very reliant on gas and coal. Even if we had doubled current wind capacity it would have left us mainly dependent on fossil fuels to keep the lights on. Some combination of large scale battery storage, pump storage schemes, the production of green hydrogen and the location of energy using businesses close to wind arrays which can handle intermittency will all be needed if the country is to rely on more wind power. It is unlikely investment in batteries and hydrogen will be sufficiently advanced this decade to avoid the need for reliance on gas and other fossil fuels as transition fuels.

The short term plan is easier to work through. There is an overwhelming case to produce more of our own fossil fuels at home. It cuts carbon dioxide output substantially to do so. It generates a big windfall in tax receipts instead of sending huge sums in tax to foreign countries and in cash to companies who export to us. It generates jobs here at home. It cuts down transmission losses. The government needs to work closely with the domestic industry to grant the permits and tackle obstacles to the necessary investment in more output.

There can be more help to encourage people and businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, offices and factories. The public sector could undertake substantial investment in energy savings measures to cut its footprint.

If the country is to succeed with the electrical revolution the government

wishes, it will take a new generation of affordable and attractive home heating and vehicle products to wean the public off their current reliance on gas to heat homes and petrol and diesel for their transport and deliveries.

Maiden Place Post Office Reopening

I have received the below letter from the Post Office regarding the good news that Maiden Place Post Office will be reopening on the 26th April:

Dear Customer,

Service Re-opening

Maiden Place Post Office

10 Maiden Lane Centre, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 3HD

We are delighted to let you know that we will be restoring Post Office services to Maiden Place on Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 13:00. The branch closed temporarily in October 2021 following the resignation of the postmaster.

The new service will be operated from the same premises and will offer a range of Post Office products and services. Full details of the new service are provided at the end of this letter.

I know that the local community will join me in welcoming this good news and hope that you and our customers will continue to use this service. If you are a local representative, please feel free to share this information through your social media channels and with any local groups or organisations that you know within the community for example on noticeboards, local charities and in GP surgeries, to help our customers and your constituents understand what is happening to the Post Office in the local community. If you would like a supply of posters, please let us know.

Thank you for your support in restoring a Post Office service.

Yours faithfully,

Network Provision Lead