

Cost of Living project proposals for 2026-27

This paper sets out proposals for the allocation of the **£500,000** Cost of Living Fund for the 2026/27 financial year. The fund is designed to complement and enhance the new Crisis and Resilience Fund by providing additional capacity to services that directly support residents experiencing financial hardship. Building on last year's programme, the proposed allocations focus on continuing the projects that demonstrated the strongest measurable impact and delivered meaningful outcomes for communities across Dorset.

The recommended investments include continued support for homelessness prevention initiatives, specialist debt and money advice provision and emergency food support.

In line with the aims of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, this year's funding will also include a commitment to work with foodbanks to introduce a broader range of wraparound support, helping residents build long-term financial resilience. Additional proposals include ongoing assistance for older people to access welfare benefits and entitlements, as well as enhanced funding for the Holiday and Food Programme, with a particular emphasis on reaching rural and underserved areas.

Collectively, these proposals maintain momentum from last year's high impact projects while strengthening the support available to vulnerable residents.

Cllr Hope, Portfolio holder Portfolio Holder, Customer, Culture and Community Engagement is asked to approve the proposed allocations so that delivery can commence at pace and ensure continuity of support for those most affected by the rising cost of living.

Laura Cornette
Business Partner – Communities and Partnerships
March 2026

No.	DC Directorate /VCSO lead	Project detail	Amount spent 2025-26	Amount 26-27		Total 2026/27
				CRF (Agreed)	Cost of Living Request 2026/27	
1	Adult Services - Housing – Homelessness prevention	1.Arrears/Rent in advance & deposit payments. This will support the team to negotiate with landlords to stop evictions from taking place or help to find new suitable accommodation. 2. Tenancy Sustainment. To maintain existing capacity of one of the tenancy sustainment officers to keep proactive negotiations with landlords 3. Food vouchers – These will continue to be used for when a resident/s present with nothing and can immediately be given by members of the housing team whilst other emergency support can be prepared	£167,500 (CoL) + £200,000 (HSF) £377,500	£202,000	£157,000	£359,000
2	Citizens Advice	Continue funding x3.5 Debt caseworkers + volunteer support and supervision. To continue to fund the Cost of Living (debt and energy) caseworkers to support increased demand. Additional resource for volunteer training and supervision CA have demonstrated significant increase in need and the impact of these officers which supports our Revs & Bens teams	£210,000	£113,500.00	£103,200	£216,700
3	Corporate Services - Revenue and Benefits	Enhance Housing Payment Allowance Fund element of the Crisis and Resilience Fund	£48,000	£458,298	£89,800	£548,098

		Increase the allocated amount from national government grant available to R&B teams to support residents struggling with housing issues and threatened homelessness. Last year the £48,000 was spent by January due to increased demand. This support stops people from needing much more expensive interventions from the Homelessness Teams. <i>We are proposing an increase from last year of £31,800 (Note: in 24/25 we funded this area £100,000)</i>				
4	Corporate Development - Communities and Partnerships & VCS	Emergency and Affordable food security Demand for emergency and affordable food projects such as social supermarkets and foodbanks continues to increase beyond current capacity. This funding will allow continued support during this financial year to provide stability whilst we work alongside foodbanks to assist them to offer a broader range of wraparound support, helping residents build long-term financial resilience. This approach is closely aligned with the new Crisis and Resilience Fund.	£125,000 HSF + £120,000 CoL	£125,000	£100,000	£225,000
5	Older people's organisations supporting applications	Much of this work is physical assistance in completing applications for Attendance Allowance; Personal Independence Payments (PIP); Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Pension Credit, often in their own homes. We propose carry on with this work with the following organisations (subject to satisfactory monitoring requirements): • Age UK NSW Dorset • Lantern Trust • Island Community Action	£75,000	£56,760	£20,000	£76,760

		• Age Concern North Dorset • You Trust • Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck				
6	Children's Services & VCSO	FY 25-26, funding enabled the provision of an additional 1,000 places as part of the summer HAF programme. Participants engaged in a diverse range of activities, including forest school sessions, football camps, performing arts workshops, and water sports. Every child received a hot, nutritious meal each day. We want to continue the pride additional support to this programme to increase capacity, particularly in rural and underserved areas.	£30,000		£30,000	£30,000
		Totals:		£955,558	£500,000	£1,455,558