

## REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 17 March 2026

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 7 April 2026

Report of: Strategic Director for Corporate Resources

Title: Crisis and Resilience Fund: Housing Payments and Crisis Payments

### Is this a Key Decision?

No

### Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

### 1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' agreement on the policy for Housing Payments under the Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026.
- 1.2 Member agreement is also sought to delegate authority to agree the scheme for disbursing Crisis Payments to the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Customer Services.

### 2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That Executive RECOMMENDS to Council that the draft policy for Crisis and Resilience Fund: **Housing Payments** is adopted.
- 2.2 That Executive agrees and RECOMMENDS to Council that the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources is given delegated authority to agree the scheme for disbursing funding for Crisis and Resilience Fund: **Crisis Payments** in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Customer Services.

### 3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1 The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme is being replaced by Housing Payments under the Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026. This policy allows the vital support provided under the DHP scheme to continue without interruption.
- 3.2 The Household Support Fund (HSF) is replaced by Crisis Payments under the Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026. Details of funding amounts and conditions are not yet known. Delegating authority for final scheme design will allow for the shortest possible gap in provision of crisis support.

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## **4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources:**

### **4.1 Housing Payments**

Department for Work and Pensions have confirmed that the allocations for Housing Payments and administration costs in 2026/27 and 2027/28 will match the DHP funding received in 2025/26 at £133,300 and £22,800 respectively.

Payment will be through a ringfenced consolidated grant as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement rather than a payment of subsidy claimed from Department for Work and Pensions.

### **4.2 Crisis Payments**

Department for Work and Pensions have confirmed that the allocations for Crisis Payments will go to Upper Tier and Unitary authorities.

Devon County Council have indicated that they will enter a Grant Funding arrangement with Exeter City Council to deliver a local Crisis Payments scheme.

### **4.3 Staffing**

Staff resources currently administering DHP and HSF, within the Benefits and Welfare team, will administer the new schemes. It is likely that administering claims for Crisis Payments will take more time than Household Support Fund due to the more comprehensive support offer. This will be kept under review.

## **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 The Housing payment element is broadly similar to the former Discretionary Housing Payments and will operate in a similar way. In order to ensure that Crisis Payments can be made as soon as possible once the Council has agreed the Grant Funding Agreement, it is necessary for a delegation to be requested.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 The CRF is a consolidated revenue grant made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act.

6.2 Funding for Housing Payments will come directly from MHCLG and will be subject to the conditions in the CRF Grant Determination Letter and Guidance to local authorities.

6.3 Funding for Crisis Payments will go to Devon County Council directly from MHCLG and will be subject to the conditions in the CRF Grant Determination Letter and Guidance to local authorities.

6.4 Exeter City Council will receive funding from Devon County Council under a Grant Funding agreement which will contain additional conditions.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

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## **8. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

- 8.1 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and Equality Impact Assessments for each scheme have been included in the background papers for Members' attention.
- 8.2 The Housing Payments policy largely adopts the policy for Discretionary Housing Payments which this scheme replaces. As funding has been maintained at the same level as the previous scheme, this policy does not create any different impacts on people with protected characteristics.
- 8.3 Adopting the Housing Payments policy allows for the positive impact from supporting low-income households with their housing costs to continue. The individual assessment of needs for applicants under this scheme allows all household characteristics to be considered, even where these are not recognised in the main welfare benefits.
- 8.4 The Crisis Payments scheme replaces the Household Support Fund but with different guidance meaning that different customers will receive awards. Although it is not clear who will gain from the new scheme of support, it is likely that some households with protected characteristics will receive less support than under previous schemes. Targeted support, allowed under HSF but not CRF, saw direct awards made to households with protected characteristics including:
- Pensioner households
  - Large families
  - Households including a disabled member

These households will be required to make an application for a Crisis Payment, and their application will be assessed under the different rules applying to the new scheme.

## **9. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

- 9.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

## **10. Report details:**

- 10.1 The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) is a new scheme introduced from April 2026. It is a consolidated revenue grant that is being delivered through the Local Government Finance Settlement, covering the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- 10.2 The CRF has two linked purposes:
- to help people deal with an immediate financial shock and,
  - to prevent future crises by improving citizens' long-term financial resilience, reducing the need for crisis support in the long-term.
- 10.3 There are four components of the scheme:
- Crisis Payments
  - Housing Payments
  - Resilience Services
  - Community Coordination

10.4 Exeter City Council's role in delivering Resilience Services and Community Coordination is yet to be finalised with Devon County Council and is not covered in this paper.

### **Housing Payments Policy**

- 10.5 This element of CRF funding replicates existing Discretionary Housing Payments and will continue to provide financial support towards housing costs to help people with rent or housing costs (but not council tax). To be eligible the claimant must be on housing benefits or the housing element of Universal Credit.
- 10.6 A total of £133,300 will be available during 2026/27 for Housing Payments. The same amount of DHP has previously supported 232 awards averaging £571 per household.
- 10.7 Payments can help where there is a shortfall between Housing Benefit and a tenant's rent charge or with one-off housing costs which benefits cannot cover. Shortfalls could be because of rent restrictions within the benefit rules or an award which is reduced due to the means test. One-off costs can include rent in advance or deposits payable to allow a tenant to move to more suitable accommodation.
- 10.8 Ongoing freezes to the amount of rent that can be met by benefits makes private sector rents unaffordable to many households relying on benefits. Housing Payments enable more households to stay in their home but can also help tenants afford the costs associated with the move to cheaper accommodation.
- 10.9 Where a customer is not eligible for a Housing Payment they may be considered for a Crisis Payment and referral to resilience services.
- 10.10 The proposed Housing Payments Policy is attached as Appendix 1 and is broadly consistent with the existing Discretionary Housing Payments Policy, with no significant changes to draw to attention.

### **Crisis Payment Policy**

- 10.11 The Crisis Payments scheme replaces the Household Support Fund from April 2026. Crisis Payments are similar to payments issued under the former Household Support Fund. However, HSF provided short-term financial help for basic needs like food and energy (e.g. supporting those that lost the Winter Fuel Allowance) but Crisis Payments are emergency, one-off payments aimed at urgent, genuine crises or housing emergencies.
- 10.12 The CRF is designed to support people facing financial shocks such as disasters, health crises or accidents, domestic abuse, theft, essential household items breaking and short-term income gaps.
- 10.13 Like HSF, responsibility and funding for the Crisis Payments will sit with Devon County Council. It is expected that DCC will enter a similar grant funding agreement with ECC to deliver a local Crisis Payments scheme as was the case for HSF.
- 10.14 The new Crisis Payments scheme will have to be designed and delivered in line with the CRF guidance and any conditions included in the grant funding agreement with DCC. Schemes are required to be available for the whole CRF funding period, so will need to be operational as soon as possible after April.
- 10.15 DWP recognise that the CRF will develop and evolve through the funding period. An outline policy for this scheme (Appendix 2) has been prepared based on published

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guidance and early feedback from DCC. It will be finalised once the funding amount and detailed Grant Funding agreement are available. The outline policy recognises that the detailed offer for Crisis Payments will change through learnings from local delivery and as good practice nationally is fed in.

- 10.16 The Crisis Payments scheme focuses on providing individuals with support in times of crisis. Guidance sets out that support should be provided where low-income households experience a financial shock or to prevent them from entering crisis. Crisis Payments are therefore not intended to provide an alternative source of regular income.
- 10.17 Individuals will need crisis support for a variety of reasons. This could be for the provision of food, utilities, household goods or other essentials. For this reason, Authorities need to adopt a cash-first approach to awarding Crisis Payments. A cash-first approach prioritises cash payments including bank transfer and cash-out vouchers.
- 10.18 Scheme guidance gives examples of circumstances which could be considered as an eligible crisis without imposing a strict definition. This will allow a degree of flexibility in our local scheme and give decision makers the ability to consider the whole of a customer's circumstances.

## **11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

- 11.1 The Housing Payments scheme assists Exeter's people in their communities and neighbourhoods by helping low income residents meet their rental liability. The policy strengthens the support provided within the main welfare benefit system. This is achieved by providing extra help where benefit rules cause inadvertent hardship or fail to recognise individual circumstances.
- 11.2 The Crisis Payments scheme will support Exeter's communities and neighbourhoods by helping low-income households manage income shocks and deal with financial crises as they occur.

## **12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

- 12.1 Moving from one scheme of housing support to another risks some customers missing out during the transition. By keeping the administration and communication in line with the DHP scheme, a continuous and consistent service can be delivered.
- 12.2 An application scheme for Crisis Payments risks being overwhelmed by applicants who previously received a direct award of Household Support Fund. Clear communication of the different eligibility criteria for a Crisis Payment will help to manage unrealistic expectations.

## **13. Are there any other options?**

- 13.1 Other than Housing Payments, there is no requirement for ECC to be involved in the delivery of CRF. Devon County Council is the responsible authority for the Crisis Payments, Resilience Services and Community Coordination strands of the scheme. Any role ECC takes in these areas is entered into through agreement with DCC.

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## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:

[Crisis and Resilience Fund \(1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029\) - GOV.UK](#)

List of Appendices:

- CRF Housing Payments EQIA
- CRF Housing Payments Policy
- CRF Crisis Payments Policy
- CRF Crisis Payments EQIA

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