



4 February 2022

## **Wandsworth charities concerned that local residents are being left out in the cold, as time running out for Council to distribute £2m winter hardship fund**

With the cost of essentials rising at the fastest rate in 30 years, the news of £700/year fuel bill increase is particularly chilling for local people and families on the lowest incomes in Wandsworth.

Throughout the winter, our seven charities have supported thousands of Wandsworth residents whose household budgets are already stretched to breaking point. Families who can put the heating on or buy enough food; or pay their rent or top up their gas or electricity meter – but not both.

At the same time, too many low-income residents have been left out in the cold by Wandsworth Council's poor delivery of the £2million Household Support Fund it received from central government last autumn.

In November, the Council announced £800,000 of its £2million Household Support Fund as fuel support payments to help lowest-income residents. By the end of January however, it had delivered just 15% of this desperately-needed support into people's pockets.

We're disappointed that the Council was quick to talk about [supporting families through the winter](#), but slower to actually support families through the winter. As a result, many local people have gone without heating and essentials this winter, despite the funding being there to help them.

It's now vital that Wandsworth Council's actions match its words for our lowest-income residents. It must ensure that every penny of the £2million Household Support Fund reaches the pockets of people in most need now – and especially by 31 March, when any unspent hardship funding returns to central government.

It's also vital that – with the Chancellor today announcing a further £140million hardship funding to local councils – Wandsworth Council now builds the robust and effective systems it will need to rapidly deliver desperately-needed financial support to low-income residents in the future.

We urge the Council to take up our charities' ongoing offers to work with the Council to shape and improve strategies and support for the poorest people in our borough – so that no one is left behind, unable to afford basic essentials in the coming months.

Aaron Barbour, Director, Katherine Low Settlement  
Dan Frith, Manager, Wandsworth Foodbank  
Egionna Treanor, CEO, Wandsworth Carers Centre  
Giles Read, Managing Director, Thinking Works  
Mary-Ann Foxwell, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Wandsworth  
Patrick Marples, CEO South West London Law Centres  
Sophie Livingstone, CEO, Little Village