

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Cluster:</u>	Housing
<u>Date:</u>	7 July 2025
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Rent Assistance Fund
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UPDATE:

Following the Communities, Housing & Public Protection Committee on the 28 March 2024, the Chief Officer for Housing was instructed to make any necessary adjustments to the criteria and management procedures of the Pilot Rent Assistance Fund. This directive aims to ensure the fund's effectiveness and responsiveness during its pilot phase.

In line with the continued development of the Pilot Rent Assistance Fund (RAF), a further proposal has been approved to utilise data from the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard. This approach aims to support tenants already in rent arrears who demonstrate resilience in managing ongoing payments despite living in poverty.

This data-led intervention identifies vulnerable households with children, living in both relative and fuel poverty, and ensures assistance is offered before arrears become unmanageable.

Proposal

Rent Assistance Fund – Tenants in Arrears Identified via LIFT

Using the LIFT dashboard, Housing Services have identified tenants who:

- Are living in relative poverty,
- Are experiencing fuel poverty,
- Have at least one dependent child, and
- Are in rent arrears but have shown consistency in covering ongoing rent charges (in full or in part) for a minimum of 3 months.

The aim is to prevent the escalation of arrears by targeting households who are most financially vulnerable but demonstrating a willingness and effort to maintain their tenancy.

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for support under this proposal, tenants must:

- Be a Council tenant in rent arrears.

- Have been covering ongoing rent payments for 3 consecutive months or more.
- Be identified through LIFT data as:
 - living in relative poverty,
 - experiencing fuel poverty, and
 - having at least one child in the household.
- Be in receipt of Universal Credit or other income-related benefits.

Implementation and Expected Impact

Eligible cases are identified via the LIFT dashboard and cross-referenced with Academy/World for arrears and rent payment patterns.

This approach will:

- Offer targeted financial support to tenants most at risk of escalating arrears.
- Help to prevent crisis-level debt and reduce the risk of enforcement or eviction.
- Recognise and reward tenants' efforts to manage rent despite hardship.
- Promote tenancy sustainment and reduce pressure on housing and welfare services.

Next Steps

A full report on the Evaluation of the Rent Assistance Fund will be presented to Committee on 26 August 2025.