# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Welsh Government support for Winter Fuel Support Scheme and Household Living Costs** |
| **DATE**  | **16 November 2021** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice** |

The Welsh Government has been clear, we will do all we can to support people in Wales with the cost-of-living crisis families are facing. That is why today I am announcing that £38million will be made available to support households through a Winter Fuel Support Scheme. A scheme that will directly support families to cover their energy costs and keep their homes warm this winter.

Eligible households in receipt of working age means-tested welfare benefits, will be able to claim a one-off £100 cash payment to provide support towards paying their winter fuel bills. This payment will be available to all eligible energy customers regardless of whether they pay for their fuel on a pre-payment meter, by direct debit or by paying a bill quarterly.

Local authorities will be writing to eligible households who they are aware of, seeking basic information to support the claim along with details to enable the payment. Alternatively individuals who qualify for this support can submit a claim via their local authority from 13 December 2021 to 18 February 2022. Further details are available on the [Welsh Government website.](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fwinter-fuel-support-scheme&data=04%7C01%7CBenjamin.Gibbs%40gov.wales%7Cb15c82837aa9404f2fa808d9a80e840f%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637725602555420895%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=6V75yLkl2Z08DjAURYr2CxGXzrHHuIn%2BB08stqAuQPo%3D&reserved=0)

Separately, I’ve also decided to provide over £1.1m to support and bolster foodbanks, community food partnerships and community hubs, supporting them to tackle food poverty, address food insecurity and provide a wider range of services to help individuals and families maximise their income. This also includes extending the successful [Big Bocs Bwyd](https://gov.wales/welsh-government-funding-roll-out-award-winning-food-project-valleys-schools) project to a further 25 schools.

We know that the immediate pressures on household incomes will force struggling families to look for credit at whatever cost, in order to try to balance household budgets. I am are therefore assigning monies to raise awareness of affordable credit, helping to mitigate the significant risk that people with a poor credit history, who cannot access mainstream forms of credit and are unaware of affordable providers such as credit unions will turn to high cost lenders or illegal lenders.

I will also be piloting a public transport assistance scheme for asylum seekers to enable greater access to education and volunteering opportunities, and I will also utilise monies for the development of a Roma Support Group focusing on Roma parents of those with school age children, to build capacity with support offered to schools, social workers and youth workers to help build understanding and expertise in supporting Roma pupils who are some of the most disadvantaged.

The above are only part of a wider £50million package aimed at supporting low income households to meet the immediate pressures on living costs this winter. The Minister for Finance and Local Government has announced the release of over £50m from reserves, and I have worked with ministerial colleagues to identify priorities for this funding, and these will be announced in due course.

We already have a range of measures, for example we are continuing to fund the [Discretionary Assistance Fund](https://gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf) Covid flexibilities over the winter, and have extended this support to Universal Credit claimants affected by the removal of the £20 uplift. We are also providing additional support for off-grid fuel clients through this fund and continue to invest in our Warm Homes Programme, as part of our tackling fuel poverty plan, published in March 2021.

We are also working hard to leave more money in the pockets of Welsh citizens through initiatives such as our Childcare Offer, our Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Free Prescriptions.

I repeatedly hear of the struggles people across Wales have been facing to meet the basic costs of living. The UK Government have failed to take meaningful action and simply refuse to grasp the stark reality of the decisions and challenges people are having to grapple with on a daily basis. In moments of greatest need, whether it is to warm people’s homes, put food on the table or pay for essentials for their children, instead of being a safety net the UK Government have stripped support away.

The meagre funding announced as part of the consequential received from UK Government Household Living Grant announcement, in no way make up for the money that has been lost by over 270,000 families in Wales. The withdrawal of the £20 per week Universal Credit, of the Working Tax Credit, of furlough and of COVID support combined with a planned hike in National Insurance, rising food costs and fuel costs have placed us in a cost of living crisis.

We know that people across Wales are facing unprecedented challenges, that’s why we’re committed to doing everything we can to relieve financial pressures and help households with their living costs – supporting families, businesses and communities through these unprecedented times.