

Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF): Children's Services Delivery Plan

Report to CRF Board – 13 May 2026

1. Purpose

This report sets out how Children's Services (CSD) will deliver elements of the East Sussex Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), in line with the decisions agreed in the Lead Member reports approved in March 2026.

The proposals outlined here will form the Children's Services contribution to the formal East Sussex CRF Delivery Plan, which will be:

- Considered through Lead Member decision-making in June 2026
- Submitted by ESCC to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) by 1 July 2026

Approval of this report will therefore enable inclusion of these proposals within the final DWP submission.

2. Strategic Approach

The proposed use of CRF funding has been developed through:

- Analysis of demand, need, and previous Household Support Fund (HSF) spend
- Engagement with CSD Departmental Management Team and Heads of Service
- Input from the CRF Reference Group (multi-agency group)
- Consideration of approaches taken by other local authorities

The approach reflects CRF guidance, which allows local discretion to:

- Define crisis and eligibility
- Target support to those most in need
- Balance immediate financial support with longer-term resilience building

The overall model is structured around four components:

1. **Crisis Payments** – immediate financial support to families in need
2. **Resilience Support** – interventions that reduce future reliance on crisis funding
3. **Community Coordination** – strengthening the local support system
4. **Administration** – ensuring effective delivery and governance

3. Financial Summary

Total allocation to Children's Services (2026–27): **£2,383,130**

Category	Total
Crisis Support	£1,350,000
Resilience Support	£810,130
Community Coordination	£131,000
Administration	£87,000

Less than 10% of funding is allocated to coordination and administration, ensuring the majority is directed to frontline delivery.

4. Crisis Support (Immediate Financial Assistance) Total: £1,350,000

CRF Guidance rationale:

Outcome 1: Provision of effective crisis support. *Delivering effective crisis support is intended to prevent the occurrence or escalation of individuals' crises. By offering timely, needs-based assistance to those with low incomes facing financial shocks, Authorities can reduce the risk of crisis need.*

Families with children: *Authorities should use their discretion to prioritise funding efficiently within their own CRF schemes, including when considering how best to support families in crisis to ensure the poorest children do not go hungry in the school holidays. Authorities should consider how best to support the poorest and most in need households*

4.1 Targeted Crisis Payments (£505,000)

Crisis payments for essential costs (e.g. food, utilities, household items), delivered through practitioner-led assessments, for the following cohorts:

Earlier Intervention through:

- **Earlier Intervention (£100,000)**
Crisis Payments to families experiencing some challenges, administered via Family First Advisors through the 'Consultation Advice Line'
- and the 'Team around Family' system.
- **Family Help through Early Help Keywork (£50,000)**
Early Help Keywork teams providing needs-based crisis payments as part of planned interventions.
- **Families receiving a statutory social care intervention for (£325,000)**
Crisis payments to families receiving a statutory social care intervention.

- **Care leavers (£30,000)**
Emergency support for essential household items and bills, alongside ongoing personal adviser support.

4.2 Holiday Food Support (£850,000)

- Continuation of **HUGGG vouchers** during Easter and May half-term 2026
- Targeted at children eligible for Free School Meals (approx. 20,000 pupils)

This is a time-limited measure, with a transition planned towards more targeted and sustainable support.

5. Resilience Support Total: £810,130

CRF Guidance rationale: *It is expected that the CRF-funded Resilience Services positively impact one or more of the following CRF outcomes: "Reduced experiences of material deprivation/Reduced need for emergency food parcels/Increased access to appropriate and quality advice services/Increased savings/Reduction in priority debt/Maximisation of individuals' incomes/Decreased need for Crisis Payments and Housing Payments"*

5.1 Intensive Support for families (£325,000)

- Structured resilience programmes for families with complex needs
- Includes funding for childcare and practical support, enabling parents to participate in interventions
- Delivered using trauma-informed approaches

Resilience Outcomes: Reduced experiences of material deprivation/ /Decreased need for Crisis Payments and Housing Payments

5.2 Early Intervention for families (£100,000)

- Targeted practitioner-led interventions aligned to family plans
- Funding used for practical items that improve longer-term stability

Resilience Outcomes: Reduced experiences of material deprivation/ /Decreased need for Crisis Payments and Housing Payments

5.3 Intentionally Homeless Families (£60,130)

- Support for approximately 20 families during assessment periods
- Covers essential costs where discretionary housing payments are unavailable
- Combined with resilience support interventions

Resilience Outcomes: Reduced experiences of material deprivation/ /Decreased need for Crisis Payments and Housing Payments

5.4 Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Expansion (£325,000)

- Increased provision in summer 2026 and new offer for October half term

- Extends beyond DfE-funded programme

Resilience Outcomes: Reduced experiences of material deprivation/ /Decreased need for Crisis Payments and Housing Payments

6. Community Coordination (£131,000)

CRF Guidance rationale: *Community Coordination: Investment in activities that connect and enhance the local support landscape*

6.1 Workforce Capability (£25,000)

- Training for practitioners on:
 - o Trauma-informed practice for families in poverty
 - o Support pathways to welfare support services

6.2 Digital Infrastructure (£64,000)

- Development of accessible digital information about services and referral pathways
- Staff resource to improve the digital content and improve online resources and ongoing service directory.

6.3 Partnership Development (£42,000)

- Partnership working and coordination across Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Health, and VCSE partners
- Alignment with Family Hubs and Family First Partnership

7. Administration (£87,000)

- **£60,000:** Administration of payments and delivery systems
- **£27,000:** Delivery of HUGGG voucher scheme

Includes:

- Application and approval processes
- Monitoring and reporting (including DWP requirements)
- Practitioner guidance

8. Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Overlap with statutory duties	Risk that CRF funding substitutes core statutory provision, creating compliance and audit issues	Clear guidance to practitioners that CRF is additional and discretionary; robust application and approval processes; regular audit and financial monitoring
Delivery and administrative complexity	Delays, errors, or non-compliance with DWP requirements	Dedicated administration resource; standardised processes; working

		within monitoring and reporting framework
Insufficient knowledge and awareness by practitioners of how to access the Crisis Payments	Lack of take – up of the funded offer for families and therefore increased risk of families experiencing greater financial challenges	Clear and regular communications to practitioners about the eligibility requirements and application processes through team briefings and digital information
Transition risk from universal (HUGGG) to targeted support	Families may experience perceived reduction in support	Clear communications; phased transition; strengthened targeted offers (HAF and practitioner-led support)

9. Recommendations

The CRF Board is asked to:

1. Approve the proposed approach and allocation of CRF funding to Children's Services for 2026–27
2. Agree that these proposals form the Children's Services contribution to the East Sussex CRF Delivery Plan, for consideration through Lead Member decisions in June 2026 and submission to DWP by 1 July 2026