# Resolve Poverty: Interpreting 'cash-first' under the new Crisis and Resilience Fund

**#3**

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) represents a welcome shift in how support for those experiencing financial crisis is delivered at the local level, and how crisis support is joined up with measures to prevent crisis and build financial resilience. The CRF provides local authorities with greater discretion than its predecessor, the Household Support Fund (HSF), over how they administer and allocate funding. This includes whether they use the CRF to cover Free School Meals (FSM) provision in school holidays, as was the case for many local authorities under the HSF. There are hence active conversations in councils as they grapple with the most effective approach to utilising their funding.

With the CRF 3-year settlement beginning in April 2026, councils are currently considering how to use their first year of funding allocation. This research project would seek to build the evidence base on precisely how it is being spent. The CRF guidance mandates that councils take a 'cash-first' approach to allocating the Fund, which is a marked difference from HSF that was largely allocated in vouchers and in-kind support and so this project will seek to uncover how councils are interpreting this priority and what this means in practice. In turn, the project will investigate how councils' allocation of the CRF varies along different dimensions, such as whether they have a current anti-poverty strategy or their local child poverty rate.

Upon approval of the project, we will submit Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all local authorities in England to request their delivery plans for the first-year of the CRF and for the final tranche of the HSF, which will detail how allocated funding has been divided up across different initiatives. With support and development from Resolve Poverty, the placement would be tasked with conducting applied, quantitative data analysis with salience and impact to policymaking. This could include questions like the average spend by councils on 'cash-first' initiatives, or uncovering the probability of a council predominantly taking a 'cash-first' approach based on whether they have an anti-poverty strategy using regression techniques

From there, the project will outline a concrete set of implementable recommendations for local authorities to deliver the CRF to most effect. By the end of this research project, in September, councils will be considering how best to utilise their CRF allocations in the second and third years of the settlement. Building the evidence base in the ways proposed would make this project a timely and strategic intervention to guide how Resolve Poverty works with local authorities to utilise the CRF over the remainder of its lifetime.

For more info on the CRF - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crisis-and-resilience-fund-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england-1-april-2026-to-31-march-2029

# PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

### Organisation and Team
Advocacy, Policy & Research

### Working Arrangement
Hybrid

### Selection Method
Interviews will be held in person
(University of Manchester)

## SUPPORT AND TRAINING

- Introduction to anti-poverty policy, particularly the roles of localities and regions in anti-poverty work.
- Working as part of a team.
- Support with research (including applying quant data methods) and writing skills.
- Coaching on presenting research findings.
- Transport costs will be covered if needed to carry out the role.

# APPLICATION CRITERIA

## ESSENTIAL

- Ability to work well as a team.
- Ability to work well with little supervision.
- Ability to analyse and interpret quantitative data to develop a coherent argument.
- Experience of carrying out desk-based research.
- Experience of carrying out primary research through a variety of methods – interviews, focus groups, surveys.
- Ability to write up case studies into a wider report.

## DESIRABLE

- Experience of poverty in your personal or professional life or through study.