

Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	Surrey County Council Response to Covid-19: COVID Winter Support Grant
Divisions Affected:	All divisions
Key Decision:	No
Reason Key:	Affects two or more Divisions
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Cabinet decision 31 March 2020 Min ref: 41/20

Summary

1. On 8 November 2020, the government [announced](#) a significant package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. This included a ringfenced DWP-funded £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support children, families and the most vulnerable from December 2020 – March 2021. Surrey County Council is due to receive an allocation of £2,126,391.50
2. DWP guidance on the grant is summarised below:
 - At least 80% of the grant must be allocated to households with children; up to 20% may be allocated to households without children or individuals. Care leavers up to the age of 25 are not classified as children for the purposes of this grant.
 - At least 80% of the grant must be allocated for food or utility bills; up to 20% of the grant can be allocated for other financial needs.
 - Local authorities may determine the groups they consider most vulnerable and the thresholds for support, however feeding children is a key aim of the grant. The funding is not means tested.
 - The grant will be paid in three instalments:
 - 50% in early December;
 - 25% in February 2021 subject to satisfactory spend and data return for December and January;
 - 25% in April 2021 subject to satisfactory spend and data return for February and March.
3. Local authorities are required to submit data returns in February and April detailing the number of grants awarded to families and to households without children (within the 80:20 restrictions) and the cash amounts awarded for food/utilities and for other (within the 80:20 restrictions).
4. Proposals were developed and approved in November/December 2020 for tranche 1 funding, through consultation throughout the Council, with the LRF, the Welfare Cell and Headteachers.
5. Allocations for tranches 2 & 3 are now being proposed based on further consultation and the positive impact made by the initial allocations.

Proposals:

6. There was strong support from school leaders and welfare rights leads for food vouchers for children in receipt of benefit related free school meals. They considered these a very effective means of targeting and distributing food support for children in very financially vulnerable households during the school holidays.
7. In addition, for low income families with children in early years (2 years old receiving Funded Early Education Provision and 3 & 4 year olds on EY Pupil Premium) SCC holds data on these children and can target support via Early Years providers.
8. Foodbanks can work alongside this, particularly outside school holidays.
9. Recognising that there are other families who will not benefit from extra targeted support for children on FSM, there was also targeted communication to these groups to access funding via the Surrey Crisis Fund and the criteria of the Surrey Crisis Fund was widened accordingly.

10. Tranche 1 was allocated as follows:

Children entitled to Free School Meals	£0.5m
Low income families with children in early years settings	£0.05m
Care Leavers	£0.02m
Surrey Crisis Fund	£0.2m
Vulnerable Adults – homeless winter cabins	£0.1m
Food Banks	£0.2m
	£1.1m

11. The success of tranche 1 funding has led to further conversations about how to allocate tranches 2 and 3 (equating to a further £1.1m).
12. The Council made a commitment to continue to support vulnerable households during the school holidays, including 1 week in February half term and the distribution of vouchers in March in advance of the 2 week Easter holidays in April.
13. In addition, feedback from the food banks were that many could continue to utilise additional funding for the remainder of this financial year as demand levels have increased since the beginning of 2021.
14. The £200k previously allocated to the Crisis Fund has not been fully utilised as demand has not been as high as anticipated, although it is forecast to be spent by the end of the financial year – therefore further support was not considered necessary. Further communications on crisis fund is due to be sent early March to raise awareness to vulnerable groups.
15. [Stripey Stork](#) is a baby bank based in Reigate that distributes donated items to families in need. They receive referrals from agencies such as schools, Health Visitors, Social Care etc and whilst they predominantly serve the East of Surrey, now distribute across Surrey. They receive no statutory funding and due to the pandemic, were not able to take donations. Using this grant they will be able to support hundreds of vulnerable children and young people across Surrey and fill the backlog of requests too.

16. The effectiveness of all the proposals in reaching the intended cohorts depends upon how much these groups are aware of the support available and how comfortable they feel in accessing it. Therefore, the Surrey Delivery Framework will continue to be supported by a communications plan led by SCC Communications colleagues working with the MIG.

Decision made

Decision made:

It was AGREED that:

The following allocations would be made from Tranches 2 & 3 of the COVID Winter Support Grant:

Children entitled to Free School Meals	£0.75m
Low income families with children in early years settings	£0.15m
Food Banks	£0.14m
Childrens Clothing and other essentials	£0.03m
	£1.1m

Reasons for Decision:

To assist those most in need of assistance with the purchase of food and other essential items during the winter months, with a particular focus on families with children, in line with the DWP grant conditions.

Decision taken by:	Leigh Whitehouse – Executive Director for Resources Rachael Wardell – Executive Director for Children, Families & Lifelong Learning Becky Rush – Cabinet Member for Resources Julie Iles – Cabinet Member for All Age Learning Mary Lewis – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families
Decision taken on:	1 March 2021
To be implemented on:	One-off payments to be made to the organisations/individuals, as set out above.

Alternative options considered

The alternative is to not accept the funding allocation from DWP which would reduce the ability of the Council to support those in the County most in need, particularly families with Children, of assistance with the purchase of food and other essentials.

A number of allocation mechanisms were considered, but the proposal above was deemed to provide the most impact and coverage across the County.

Summary of any financial implications

The DWP grant allocation amounts to £2,126,391.50. This is due to be received by the Council in 3 tranches, dependent on the submission of accurate allocation management information. Tranche 1 allocations will be made to organisation/individuals in December and tranche 2/3 allocations made in February/March.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Consultation/Process Followed

Decisions taken in consultation with colleagues in the LRF Welfare Cell, the Education Cell of school phase council headteachers, the Surrey Crisis Fund, Twelve15 (SCC school catering), Surrey Welfare Rights Unit, SCC finance, children's services, the virtual school, adult social care, schools relationships service and EMT, and are based on the grant guidance issued by from DWP.

Background Documents

Exempt:

Cabinet report 31 st March 2020 setting out the council's response to Covid-19.
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