

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:	Yes
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 has been received and 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 will be 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).

Proposals:

4. These proposals were developed through consultation throughout the Council, with the LRF, the Welfare Cell and Headteachers. The proposals should be considered in light of what is practical to meet these requirements within a two month window. More targeted options will be easier to distribute and to evidence in order to release further funding.

5. The proposals below are focussed on the first tranche (50%) covering December and January. If this tranche is not spent then further funding may not be released. This also enables the flexibility to adapt the distribution strategy of the second 2 tranches to support different targeted groups as needs emerge and develop.
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. Foodbanks can work alongside this, particularly outside school holidays, however feedback is that the foodbank network varies in consistency and prevalence across Surrey, which limits parity of access.
8. Recognising that there are other families who will not benefit from extra targeted support for children on FSM, the proposal is to target communication to these groups to access funding via the Surrey Crisis Fund and widen the criteria of the Surrey Crisis Fund accordingly.
9. 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.
10. 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 once agreed, the Surrey Delivery Framework will 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 Tranche 1 of the COVID Winter Support Grant:

Children entitled to Free School Meals	£0.5m
2, 3 and 4 year old children with Funded Early Education Provision (FEED) and EY Pupil Premium	£0.05m
Care Leavers	£0.02m
Surrey Crisis Fund	£0.2m
Vulnerable Adults (to be determined by ASC)	£0.1m
Food Banks	£0.2m
	£1.1m

Indicative allocations of tranche 2 and 3 will include further food vouchers issues to schools and early years providers to support families with children (entitled to Free Schools Meals) for the February half term week and distributed in March in advance of the 2 week Easter holidays. Other allocations of tranches 2 & 3 will be determined based on experiences of tranche 1 funding and any emerging areas of need at the time.

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 Liz Mills – Director; Education, Learning & Culture Mel Few – Cabinet Member for Resources Julie Iles – Cabinet Member for All Age Learning Mary Lewis – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families
Decision taken on:	30 November 2020
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 on how tranche 1 was utilised. Tranche 1 allocations will be made, as set out above to organisations/individuals in December, with further allocations dependent on take up and spend against the initial allocation.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Consultation/Process Followed

Decision 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 31st March 2020 setting out the council’s response to Covid-19.

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