

Agenda Item: 13

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND PROGRESS

Purpose of the Report

1. This report is to update Committee on progress to deliver the Fund

Information

2. Members will recall that in the Autumn the Government allocated £5.6m to the Council to support those in immediate need as a consequence of the Covid pandemic, with funding to be spent by the end of March 2022. The funding is to provide support with food, energy, and water bills, as well as essential costs related to those items, and (in exceptional cases) to housing costs.
3. Members will further recall that a decision was taken at November's Children and Young People's Committee to spend £2.3m of the Fund to provide food vouchers to children entitled to Free School Meals for each of the five school holiday weeks between October and the end of March.
4. Collaborative working to deliver the remaining £3.3m for other forms of support has continued through the Household Support Fund Partnership Steering Group that includes County, Borough, and District Council colleagues.
5. Working with these partners to address concerns that not all residents in immediate need may not be accessing the fund and were not known to professional assessors, a provision allowing individual application commenced as of 25 January.
6. In addition, the partners identified that those in immediate need accessing a professional assessment, were requesting further support with food and energy costs. Responding to this need the overall value of vouchers have been amended, as described below.

Progress to Date

7. As at 23 February, in summary the following has been provided to those in immediate need:
 - £2.7m of food vouchers to those entitled to free school meals for the October, December, and February school holidays
 - £1.75m of Food and Energy Vouchers to 21,428 Households
 - £11k of Essential Domestic Appliances

8. The paragraphs below provide a further breakdown of this support.
9. **School holiday food vouchers** - Following a review of the demand for support from the scheme in the winter months, the amount provided for those eligible for Free School Meals in February doubled the normal amount provided. The standard amount issued for Free School Meals is £3 per child, per day, £15 per week.
10. Therefore, an increase of £15 per child for the February Half Term has enabled families to access additional support during the winter months to assist households' budgets toward the recent rise in cost of living.
11. The amounts of food vouchers deployed by setting to date for the for those eligible for Free School Meals are set out in the table below. The vouchers have been provided to approximately 29,830 pupils for each of the weeks of the holidays.

| Channel | October £ | December £ | February £ | Total Applied to Date £ |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Schools and Academies | 750,795 | 882,195 | 798,120 | 1,632,990 |
| Early Years Providers | 71,250 | 70,590 | 77,940 | 141,840 |
| Colleges | 12,495 | 25,590 | 24,600 | 38,085 |
| Inspire | 1,560 | 1,770 | 1,980 | 3,330 |
| RNN Group (Training Provider) | 1,560 | 1,560 | 1,380 | 3,120 |
| Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) | 2,910 | 3,060 | 3,450 | 5,970 |
| Total | £840,570 | £984,765 | £984,765 | £2,732,805 |

Other Support

12. The table below outlines the original amount of support offered from 15 November 2021 – 23 January 2022, and the revised amount issued from 24 January 2022 onwards, responding to the issues raised by partners.

| | | ORIGINAL AMOUNT | REVISED AMOUNT |
|---------------|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| Food | A household with one person | 1 x £30 | 1 x £60 |
| | A household with two people | 1 x £60 | 1 x £120 |
| | A household with three or more people | 1 x £90 | 1 x £180 |
| Energy | A max of 2 vouchers for energy for £49 each per household | 2 x £49 | 4 x £49 |
| Water | The value of the voucher for water will be £80 per household | 1 x £80 | 1 x £80 |

13. All submissions made before 24 January 2022 have been issued vouchers for the difference to ensure that all those supported by the scheme are treated equally.
14. As at, 23 February 21,428 Households have been provided with £1,755,864 of support, broken down between 'food' totalling £1,106,466, and 'energy' totalling £649,398 as detailed below.

| | Food | | Energy | | Total | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Number of awards | Value £ | Number of awards | Value £ | Number of awards | Value £ |
| Households with Children | 6,376 | £737,695 | 5,703 | £383,918 | 12,439 | £1,121,613 |
| Households without Children | 4,925 | £368,771 | 4,064 | £265,480 | 8,989 | £634,251 |
| Total | 11,661 | £1,106,466 | 9,767 | £649,398 | 21,428 | £1,755,864 |

15. **Energy** – From the outset support has been provided for those who pay for their energy through PayPoint meter top ups. Due to the other different methods used (eg direct debit, payment at the Post Office, online payment etc) to pay for energy had not been available initially.
16. To ensure that every household could receive the same level of support food vouchers, to the same value as the energy vouchers have been issued in lieu of those who do not use PayPoint.
17. **Water** – Limited requests for water support have been received as our partners identified schemes that offer longer term support to those in need. This has allowed the fund to provide further support for energy and food.

18. **Essential Domestic Appliances** - support has been provided outlined in the table below.

| Item | Number provided | £ |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Fridge Freezer | 11 | £3,299 |
| Washing Machine | 16 | £3,808 |
| Electric Cooker | 14 | £3,458 |
| Gas cooker | 1 | £272 |
| Undercounter fridge | 2 | £376 |
| Total | 44 | £11, 213 |

Individual Applications to the Fund

19. In order to make the funding as widely available as possible in January 2022, the scheme accepted individual applications from members of the public through our telephone line or by our website. This allowed members of the public not receiving professional support by the partnership (ie housing, revenues and benefits, social workers etc) to access the fund by providing evidence of their eligibility.

20. Over 2000 households requested support from the fund in the first two weeks. individual applications paused on 10 February in order to process the outstanding submissions. As at 23 February, 1,663 individual applications have been processed, providing Food vouchers of the value £150,180 and energy of £116,032

Next Steps

21. The total current spend is outlined in the table below:

| | Forecast £ |
|---|-----------------------|
| Holiday Food Vouchers for those in receipt of Free School Meals | £2,732,805 |
| Other Essential Support | £2,033,290 |
| Administration Costs | £210 829 |
| Total Current Spend | £4,976,924 |
| Predicted Future Spend | |
| Outstanding Individual Applications | £93,500 |
| Other Essential Support (based on five weeks remaining at approx £117,205 spend per week) | £576,026 |
| Total Predicted Spend | £5,646,450 |
| Amount Awarded by Government | £5,646,450 |

22. At the time of writing the scheme has been running for 14 weeks, and 5 weeks remain. It is expected to that the entirety of the fund will be spent by 31 March 2022. The fund closes on 31st March 2022 and it is proposed that the Early Help and Support Team, if approved by this Committee, alongside the existing Communities Team will help to continue to maximise support for our communities.

Other Options Considered

23. Continuation of individual applications into the fund as well as professional referrals from partners

Reasons for Recommendation

24. To ensure that the available funding is fully utilised and effectively managed to support the intended beneficiaries.

Statutory and Policy Implications

25. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

26. Current spend is £4,976,924 and it is predicted that £669,526 will be spent before 31 March 2022 meaning that the entire spend of £5,646,450 will have been provided to those in immediate need in the county.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 1) Approves that a further report be brought to the next Committee to update and to ratify the finishing position of the scheme

Derek Higton
Service Director, Place and Communities

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mark Walker, Group Manager, Trading Standards and Communities, Tel: 0115 977 2173

Constitutional Comments (KK 17/02/2022)

27. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Communities Committee.

Financial Comments [RWK 17/02/2022]

28. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All