

18th January 2021

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

COVID WINTER GRANT SCHEME BUDGET

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval of amended spending plans for the Nottinghamshire allocation of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme.

Information

2. On 8th November 2020, the government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. Funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been issued to County Councils and Unitary Authorities to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. Nottinghamshire County Council's allocation is £2,316,008.
3. Targeting this money effectively will help to ease the burden faced by a wide range of vulnerable households across the County worrying about paying the next utility bill or the next food shop due to the pandemic.
4. The Local Authority is able to determine eligibility in their area and target their support within the scope of the conditions set out below:
 - at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals
 - at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items.

Local Activity

5. As agreed at the Children and Young People's Committee on 30th November 2020, most of the funding will be allocated to households with children who are claiming Free School Meals (FSM). This funding has been distributed to schools and Further Education Colleges to cover the Christmas holidays and February half term.
6. Committee approved the following funding breakdown:

Free School Meals	£1.15 million
Vulnerable families with children with an allocated lead professional	£0.6 million
Households with no children and vulnerable individuals	£0.45 million

7. The figures provided at Committee were approximate allocations and now that further work and consultation has taken place, a review of the funding allocations has been undertaken.

Families with Children (80% of Grant)

8. Due to increasing free school meal claimants in Nottinghamshire, indicative allocations have been reviewed and it is now proposed to amend the allocations as follows:
- a) £1.036m of the grant is required for the provision of supermarket vouchers to those families where children are in receipt of FSM. This includes school aged pupils and those in sixth forms and Further Education Colleges. Households will receive £15 each week of the holidays per child
 - b) in line with other local authorities, £100,000 will be provided for funded 2-year olds and 3- and 4-year olds eligible for the Early Years Pupil Premium. Early years settings will provide £10 supermarket vouchers each week of the holidays or may choose to provide food parcels to cover these periods
 - c) approximately £500,000 will be allocated to families known to the Council with a key worker such as a Social Worker or Family Support Worker. These families will be assessed by the worker and will receive supermarket vouchers and support with utility bills if required. Their priority will be focused in the main on children not eligible for FSM but whose household is struggling financially because of Covid. These services will be able to assist families between December and the end of March so support will be provided during term time also.

Households without children or Vulnerable Individuals (20% of grant)

9. Following the latest DWP guidance and close work with other local authorities, the inclusion of Care Leavers and other young people aged 19-24 years must fall into this category of households without children or vulnerable individuals. This has resulted in further changes to this allocation as follows:
- a) £18,000 is allocated for Care Leavers aged 19-24 years to purchase supermarket vouchers during the school holidays at £15 per week for three weeks. Their key worker will provide vouchers directly to them
 - b) £5,400 is allocated for young people with an Education, Health & Care Plan aged 19-24 years who are eligible for FSM to cover the Christmas holidays and February half term. FE Colleges will provide supermarket vouchers at £15 per head for the three weeks.
 - c) £341,600 will be allocated to District Councils. The project team has met several times with the Local Resilience Forum's Humanitarian Assistance Group which includes all District and Borough Council partners. District Councils will provide a mixture of supermarket vouchers and/or donations to food clubs and food banks.

Other Costs

10. The grant is also intended to support residents with utility bills during winter. £85,000 will be allocated to the Nottingham Energy Partnership (NEP) through a grant agreement, they will provide fuel vouchers and support for households who require assistance to pay for their utility bills – namely energy/fuel vouchers and water bills (but not rent or other housing costs). They will support both households with and without children.
11. Demand on the full grant scheme are not yet known so it is prudent to retain some funds for contingency for after Christmas. It is proposed that £230,000 will initially be set aside for contingency to support children who may become eligible for FSM during the winter period and to support emerging needs that have yet to be identified. There has already been an increase in FSM claims since October half term so it is likely that demand will increase for February half term. This also assumes that demand will increase for other households as well as those with school aged children.
12. As agreed at Committee, £100,000 of the £230,000 allocation is set aside for administrative costs and Nottingham Energy Partnership will receive £11,000 to increase their capacity to assist with phone requests. There may be other administrative fees associated with the grant scheme that are not yet known e.g. printing and postage of vouchers. Any unspent funds will be used for contingency. All the grant will need to be fully spent by 31st March 2021 so budgets will be monitored closely on a weekly basis to ensure that funds are allocated and used by those in need.

COVID WINTER GRANT £2.3m PROPOSED ALLOCATIONS	
Proposed allocation of funds	Amount £
Children up to 19 years entitled to Free School Meals	1,036,000
2, 3- and 4-year olds with Funded Early Years Provision or Early Years Pupil Premium	100,000
Young People with EHC Plans who are eligible for Free School Meals	5,400
Nottingham Energy Partnership	85,000
District Council Allocations	341,600
Care Leavers	18,000
Social Care and Early Help Lead Professionals	500,000
Contingency and admin costs	230,000
Total Allocation	£2,316,000

Other Options Considered

13. Due to the short timescales involved no other options have been considered.

Reason for Recommendations

14. The recommendations support the conditions and purpose of the grant as set by government whilst meeting local priorities.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. 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

16. As described above, this report proposes some changes to the financial allocations for the scheme. These changes reflect the feedback from stakeholders and the increasing demand on the scheme following additional claims for FSM.
17. The funding for this scheme is set by the Government and is not expected to be extended. Therefore, the scheme may be terminated at any time prior to the end of March 2021 if the funding has been fully awarded.
18. Close scrutiny of the funding allocations will be in place in order to allocate any contingency funding appropriately.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That the Committee approves the expenditure plan for the Nottinghamshire allocation of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme as detailed in **paragraphs 8-12** of the report.

Laurence Jones
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Constitutional Comments (ELP 21/12/20)

19. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 17/12/20)

20. The revised allocations are contained within the overall grant funding allocation of £2.316m and will be monitored through the usual monthly financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.

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.

[Covid Winter Grant Scheme – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 30th November 2020](#)

Covid Winter Grant Scheme Equalities Impact Assessment

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

C1432