

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Leader of the County Council/ Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	19 May 2021
<b>Title:</b>	COVID Local Support Grants
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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#### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed approach to distributing £682,047 in Covid related funding from the Department for Work and Pensions under the Covid Local Support Grant scheme.
2. This report seeks approval from the Leader of Hampshire County Council for spend and grant funding to organisations in support of vulnerable households.

#### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Leader approves the grant of £561,030 funding to schools, colleges and early years settings for them to purchase and provide one £15 food voucher per child for the one-week May half term school holiday, in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 10. Vouchers will be available for all children eligible for free school meals and additionally all children with a social worker, all children open to early help, 16-18 year olds previously eligible for FSM, all 2-4 year olds accessing childcare and eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, as described in paragraph 16 of the report.
4. It is recommended that the Leader approves the purchase of one £15 food or fuel voucher for each care leaver not forming part of the extended FSM cohort identified in paragraph 16, to the total value of up to £5,000.

5. It is recommended that a grant of up to £3,000 to be made to the Hampshire Young Carers Alliance such that vouchers and/or gifts and/or food can be provided to young carers not in receipt of vouchers through the free school meal voucher offer. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 10.
6. It is recommended that the Leader delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve community grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 10) for targeted financial support for those in need in consultation with the Leader up to the total value of £112,000.
7. It is recommended that the Leader delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve the reallocation of any COVID Winter Grants remaining or underspent funds to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant set out in paragraph 10 in consultation with the Leader.

### **Contextual Information**

8. On 17 April 2021, the Government announced an extension to the COVID grant support for vulnerable families. A further £40 million of support has been made available to local authorities to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs.
9. This funding builds on the previous Covid Winter Grant administered by the Department for Work and Pension, and Hampshire County Council's funding under this grant totals £682,047, to be spent by 20 June 2021.
10. The conditions of the COVID Local Support Grant are the same as those that applied to the Covid Winter grant, i.e.:
  - at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding allocated for 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% made available for other essential items.

## **Hampshire's Approach**

11. Following Hampshire County Council's successful connect4communities programme, funded by the DWP Covid Winter Grant, there is evidence of successful engagement with the community and voluntary sector as well as education settings.
12. Allocation of funding is therefore proposed to replicate some of the initiatives previously funded by the Covid Winter Grant. This approach will allow rapid distribution of funding to those can make best use of it, supported by evidence of successful outcomes between December 2020 and April 2021.

## **Free school meal vouchers**

13. It is recommended that the Leader approves the grant of £561,030 funding to schools, colleges and early years setting for them to purchase and provide one £15 voucher per child for the one-week May half term school holiday, in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 10. An estimated 37,402 children will be able to access vouchers as a result of this initiative.
14. Under the Covid Winter grant scheme, schools, colleges and early years settings successfully distributed grant funding in this way for the December 2020 school holidays as well as the February 2021 half term and the Easter 2021 school holidays.
15. DWP has indicated that the Covid Winter Grant is not specifically targeted at free school meals families. Therefore, local authorities are obligated to target a wide range of vulnerable households. However, utilising free school meal eligibility as an indicator of potential vulnerability, and providing education settings with the means to supply vouchers, the County Council can ensure that timely financial support for food bills will be in place prior to the May half term holiday for a large cohort of vulnerable families.
16. To ensure support is delivered to the wider range of vulnerable households, it is recommended that the cohort of children and families receiving vouchers is expanded to include:
  - All children with a social worker
  - All children open to early help services
  - 16-18 year olds previously eligible for FSM
  - All 2-4 year olds accessing childcare and eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium.
17. Schools, colleges and early years settings will be given flexibility to choose the voucher provider best suited to the need and systems within their establishment, with guidance and support offered from the County Council. Funding allocations to schools have been calculated based on the January

school census data, the January Early Years headcount and from social care data from May 2021. It is acknowledged that there will be changes to the number of children open to early help and social workers, and potential changes to the number of children with FSM eligibility from the time of the autumn census. A process will be established with schools whereby any increase in the number of children eligible for the vouchers under this programme can be accommodated and additional funding passed to schools, colleges and early years providers where required.

### **Care Leavers**

18. It is recommended that the Leader approves the purchase of a £15 food or fuel voucher for each care leaver not forming part of the extended FSM cohort identified in paragraph 16, to the value of £5,000. An estimated 320 care leavers will receive these vouchers.

### **Young Carers**

19. Many young carers and their families will receive a voucher under the extended FSM criteria outlined in paragraph 16. However, there are an estimated 389 young carers who may not be picked up within this offer. It is therefore recommended that a grant of up to £3,000 is made to the Hampshire Young Carers Alliance such that vouchers, activities and/or food can be provided to these families.

### **Community grants**

20. There are a significant number of agencies, notably voluntary and charitable sector providers and after school clubs, supporting vulnerable families, households, and individuals. There are also a number of organisations who wish to support their local community with food and fuel poverty, particularly in rural areas. It is proposed that a countywide grant fund is established where such organisations can apply for funding to expand or deliver support and services. Any funded support must meet the DWP grant criteria, as set out in paragraph 10, but use of such a grant fund will enable a flexible and responsive approach to addressing local needs as and when they are identified.
21. Education settings will also be able to apply to this grant fund to secure funds to support vulnerable families who do not necessarily meet the criteria for the free school meal vouchers.
22. Furthermore, applications for funding will be invited from holiday activity providers who may wish to provide not only a hot meal for vulnerable children, but also fun and educational activities too over the May half term

holiday. These schemes must be accessible by children eligible for FSM (over 20,000 children in Hampshire) and, where possible, the wider eligible cohort identified for meal vouchers in this programme.

23. Subject to confirmation from DWP, it is recommended that the Leader delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 13) for targeted financial support for those in need over winter in consultation with the Leader up to the value of £112,000.

### **Administration Costs**

24. The COVID Local Support Grant funding allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable local authorities to deliver the scheme and it is therefore permitted for Hampshire County Council (and partners) to deduct estimated administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining. Administration costs for each local authority will be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) alongside detail of all spend related to this scheme.
25. Hampshire County Council is seeking to minimise administration costs and £1,000 has been set aside as a contribution to the staffing costs associated with allocating funding, grant agreements and oversight.

### **Finance**

26. A summary of the proposed funding across the initiatives to be delivered with the DWP Covid Local Support Grant is set out in table 1:

Table 1

<b>Connect4Communities – Hampshire’s Covid Local Support Grant Scheme</b>	
<b>Component</b>	<b>Funding Allocation</b>
<b>Meal Vouchers</b> £15 per child per week for: All FSM eligible children; plus All children open to a social worker; plus All children open to early help; plus All post 16 students previously eligible for FSM; plus All 2-4 year olds accessing childcare and eligible for Early Years pupil premium children.	£561,030
Care Leavers Vouchers	£5,000
Young Carers Grant	£3,000
Community Grants	£112,000
Administration of the Grant	£1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£682,030</b>
<b>Grant available</b>	<b>£682,047</b>

### **Performance**

27. All funding granted to third party organisations (including schools, colleges and early years providers) will be supported by a grant agreement setting out the conditions of the funding as well as reporting requirements.
28. Third party organisations will be required to report to the County Council on how they have spent the funding provided, in line with the DWP grant criteria set out in paragraph 10.
29. Allocation of funding across the grant criteria set out in paragraph 10 will be monitored to ensure spend remains compliant with the terms of the grant.

### **Consultation and Equalities**

30. Consultation and engagement have been undertaken as part of developing and delivering the Covid Winter Grants programme.
31. School and colleges have previously been consulted regarding their preferred method of supporting children with food by way of a questionnaire.

32. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

33. It is recommended that the Leader approves the grant of £561,030 funding to schools, colleges and early years settings for them to purchase and provide one £15 voucher per child for the one week May half term school holiday, in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 10. Vouchers will be available for all children eligible for free school meals and additionally all children with a social worker, all children open to early help, 16-18 year olds previously eligible for FSM, all 2-4 year olds accessing childcare and eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, as described in paragraph 16 of the report. An estimated 37,402 children will be able to access vouchers as a result of this initiative.
34. It is recommended that the Leader approves the purchase of one £15 food or fuel voucher for each care leaver not forming part of the extended FSM cohort identified in paragraph 16, to the total value of up to £5,000.
35. It is recommended that a grant of up to £3,000 to be made to the Hampshire Young Carers Alliance such that vouchers and/or gifts and/or food can be provided to young carers not in receipt of vouchers through the free school meal voucher offer. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 10.
36. It is recommended that the Leader delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve community grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 10) for targeted financial support for those in need in consultation with the Leader up to the total value of £112,000.
37. It is recommended that the Leader delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve the reallocation of any COVID Winter Grants remaining or underspent funds to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant set out in paragraph 10 in consultation with the Leader.

## **Climate Change**

38. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C

temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

39. The decision is essentially strategic/administrative in nature and does not have any climate change considerations.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	no
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	Yes
<b>OR</b>	

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

Document

Location

None

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

Equalities Impact Assessments have been completed for each project.

## **Appendix 1 – Copy of Equalities Impact Assessment**

**Name of project or proposal (required):** COVID Winter Grants Scheme to be known in Hampshire as the Connect4Communities Programme – Further Initiatives

**Is this project a Transformation project? (required):** Neither

**Name of accountable officer (required):** Suzanne Smith

**Email (required):** suzanne.smith2@hants.gov.uk

**Department (required):** Children's Services

**Date of assessment (required):** 10/05/2021

**Is this a detailed or overview EIA? (required):** Overview

### **Describe the current service or policy:**

The DWP COVID Local Support Grant will provide £682,030 of funding to HCC to support those most in need, with costs of food, energy, water bills and essentials. The grant conditions state at least 80% must be used for food and fuel, and no more than 20% on other items. Also 80% of the fund must be spent on families with children and up to 20% on other households including individuals. A variety of initiatives have been identified working with education establishments and local community partners to ensure households who are most vulnerable have access to food and fuel this winter.

**Geographical impact (required):** All Hampshire

### **Describe the proposed change:**

The COVID Local Support Grant is aimed at vulnerable families, particularly those with children and will offer financial support with food and energy bills. Working with schools, colleges and early years providers, the proposed programme will deliver food vouchers and other financial support to a wide range of vulnerable families for school holiday period between 17 April and 20 June 2021. Through grant funding, the programme will also support the development and delivery of a range of other community led projects and holiday activity and food schemes to meet local needs across Hampshire.

**Who does this impact assessment cover? (required):** Service users

**Has engagement or consultation been carried out? (required):** Yes

### **Describe the consultation or engagement you have performed or are intending to perform:**

After notification, a task group formed with representatives from major stakeholder groups including the voluntary and charitable sector, Connect4Summer leads, Adult Health & Care, Local Children's Partnerships, Supporting Families, Children's Social Care, Early Years and Wraparound Childcare, County Supplies

&HC3S and Communications. A variety of other stakeholders have been consulted so existing local provision and need could be identified and minimise risks in respect of funding duplication. Other consulted groups include head teacher groups, faith groups and local resilience centres/hubs. The engagement created the offers under a programme name of 'Connect4Communities'.

**Age (required):** Positive

Impact (required): Children, families and individuals who are vulnerable (eligible for benefits, allocated a social worker or in a low income setting) or find themselves in hardship due to the impact of COVID 19, this programme, with signposting from agencies, will help to identify and help those people to ensure they have access to food and heating this winter, as well as other basics which may be identified such as cooking facilities, bedding or other essentials.

**Disability (required):** Positive

Impact (required):

Children, families and individuals with disabilities and who are vulnerable (eligible for benefits, allocated a social worker or in a low income setting) or find themselves in hardship due to the impact of COVID 19, this programme, with signposting from agencies, will help to identify and help those people to ensure they have access to food and heating this winter, as well as other basics which may be identified such as cooking facilities, bedding or other essentials.

**Sexual orientation (required):** Neutral

**Race (required):** Neutral

**Religion or belief (required):** Neutral

**Gender reassignment (required):** Neutral

**Gender (required):** Neutral

**Marriage or civil partnership (required):** Neutral

**Pregnancy and maternity (required):** Neutral

**Poverty (required):** Positive

**Impact (required):** Additional funding will be distributed to help those children, families and individuals who live in poverty or are in need of food, energy and other basic items, should have more access to help.

**Rurality (required):** Neutral

Any other brief information which you feel is pertinent to this assessment (optional):

Please confirm that the accountable officer has agreed the contents of this form (required): Yes

## **Appendix 2 – COVID Local Support Grant Guidance**