

Committee:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services Committee	11/12/2020
Subject:	Public
COVID Winter Grant Scheme	
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to a flourishing society • Support a thriving economy • Shape understanding environments.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
What is the source of Funding?	DWP COVID Winter grant allocation.
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y Chamberlain's are aware of the Winter Grant Scheme and have been involved in setting this scheme up.
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Theresa Shortland, Head of Service – Education and Early Years	

Summary

- The purpose of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme is to provide support to vulnerable households and families with children who have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the winter period. The allocation from the COVID Winter Grand Scheme for the City of London is £20,166.
- The proposal for administering the COVID Winter Grant Scheme in the City of London is to target those children and families that we know will benefit, and to support those young people aged over 18 that are in full-time education or living independently. The scheme in the City has been developed using a wide range of data and sources of information at our disposal to identify and provide support to vulnerable households in the City of London local area.
- We propose to make a payment for each child and young person that meet the criteria, to cover the costs of food and fuel during the school holidays. The school holiday periods that are relevant to this grant are Christmas holidays 2020 and Spring half term 2021. We will allocate the funding for seven days a week during these periods.
- The scheme also allows for allocations of funding to support other essentials items including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, and blankets,

recognising that a range of costs may arise that directly affect a household's ability to afford or access food, energy and water.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note this report for providing the COVID Winter Grant Scheme in the City of London.

Main Report

Background

1. Since 23 March 2020, when the first COVID-19 lockdown began, all children entitled to a free school meal (FSM) have had access to a meal in school, a food parcel, or food voucher. During the 2020 summer holidays, and in response to the unprecedented circumstances brought about by COVID-19, the Government provided the COVID Summer Food Fund, which gave food vouchers to families with children eligible for FSMs over the summer holidays. The Government then announced that it would not continue this provision into school holidays for the winter term, 2020. The City of London, however, did provide food vouchers for local children entitled to FSMs during the October half term, and extended the vouchers to those children on the vulnerable children's list who are experiencing food poverty.
2. On 8 November 2020, the Government announced that they were funding a COVID Winter Grant Scheme for local authorities to provide a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. The COVID Winter Grant Scheme should provide vulnerable families with peace of mind in the run up to Christmas and over the winter months during the pandemic by helping those who need it to have food on the table and other essentials, so every child will be warm and well-fed this winter.

Current Position

3. The purpose of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme is to provide support to vulnerable households and families with children who have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the winter period. The allocation from the COVID Winter Grant Scheme for the City of London is £20,166.
4. All children eligible for FSMs receive the meal in school, so only receive this during term time. The City of London has funded FSMs for all children at the Aldgate School, the one maintained school in the City of London, since 2018. The majority of City resident children attend schools out of the area, and those entitled to FSMs receive this at the school they attend during term time.
5. In the early years, the Healthy Start programme supports lower-income pregnant women and families with children aged under four to buy fruit, vegetables, pulses,

milk and infant formula, providing an important nutritional safety net. This is part of the Children's Centre Services provision in the City of London.

6. Since March 2020, the City of London Education and Early Years' Service and Children's Social Care Service have developed a 'vulnerable children' list. The children and young people on this list are known to one or more services in the City and have been supported in various ways since March 2020.
7. The proposed approach will complement other support available to households in need. These include support from City Advice (who are able to issue food vouchers), support via social services and crisis support through the First Love Foundation Foodbank.

Proposals

Grant conditions/eligibility

8. The proposal for administering the COVID Winter Grant Scheme in the City of London is to target the scheme at those children, families and individuals that we know are in need, providing additional support to have food on the table and other essentials, so that every child will be warm and well-fed this winter. The scheme in the City has been developed using a wide range of data and other sources of information at our disposal to identify and provide support to vulnerable households in the City of London local area.
9. We propose to make a payment for each child and young person that meets the criteria to cover the costs for food and fuel during the school holidays. The school holiday periods that are relevant to this grant are Christmas holidays 2020 and Spring half term 2021. We will allocate the funding for seven days a week during these periods.
10. For the purpose of this grant, the definition of a child is any person:
 - who will be under the age of 19 as at 31 March 2021
 - a person aged 19 or over for whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid, or free school meals are provided

Where an eligible child is living on his or her own, they should be treated as a 'household'.

Key Data

11. The COVID Winter Grant Scheme is being classified as Local Welfare Provision (LWP). Local authorities have legal permission to access the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP's) Searchlight portal. This portal provides information on an individual citizen's entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Therefore, this data can be used to help identify those families and individuals to target support to.
12. The vulnerable children's list will be the primary list that is used for identifying those families most in need of support from this grant. Children's Services have

worked with Children's Social Care, the Benefits team, Housing Services, The Aldgate School, and children's centre services in the City to ensure that we are aware of all children, families and individuals likely to need support. Data will be used to target families to ensure that every child living in the City of London will be warm and well-fed this winter.

Target Groups in the City of London

13. The criteria for Children and Families includes children and young people:
 - entitled to FSMs
 - entitled to a free early education place for two-year olds/early years pupil premium
 - qualify for the Healthy Start Programme.

14. The criteria for vulnerable households include a person aged 19 to 25 who:
 - have special educational needs and disability (SEND)
 - are care leavers.

15. We propose to make a payment for each child and young person who meet the criteria to cover the costs for food and fuel during the school holidays. The school holiday periods that are relevant to this grant are Christmas holidays 2020 and Spring half term 2021. We will allocate the funding for seven days a week during these periods. On the current school holidays this means we will make payments for each child for a total of 25 days which is a total of £125 per child until the Easter holidays in April 2021.

16. The scheme also allows for allocations of funding to support other essentials, including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, and blankets, recognising that a range of costs may arise that directly affect a household's ability to afford or access food, energy and water. The City does provide clothing grants, however, we will extend the provision of other essential items to City children, families and individuals in need. This element of the scheme will be assessed by Children's Social Care and the Early Help Service.

Financial implications

17. This scheme is grant funded by the DWP. The allocation from the COVID Winter Grant Scheme for the City of London is £20,166. The COVID Winter Grant Scheme is ring-fenced and any unspent funding will need to be repaid to the DWP.

18. Payment of the grant from DWP to local authorities will be made in three instalments:
 - First payment – 50 per cent of your allocation at the start of the scheme (in early December 2020)
 - Second payment – 25 per cent at the end of February 2021
 - Final payment – 25 per cent following the end of the scheme in April/May 2021.

Resource implications

19. Staff resources are required to manage and administer the scheme. Reasonable costs can be used from the allocation to cover these costs. The City is proposing to do this from existing resources, so that the maximum grant is allocated to our children and families.

Equalities implications

20. In the context of this grant we know that a high proportion of the children and families in the dataset are at risk of food and fuel poverty due to family income. A high percentage are families from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. The data set also includes those children with SEND.

Conclusion

21. The COVID Winter Grant Scheme in the City of London will be a targeted scheme to ensure that those most at risk of needing support to cover costs for food and utilities over the winter period receive the right funding, to ensure that every child will be warm and well-fed this winter.

Theresa Shortland

Head of Service – Education and Early Years

E: theresa.shortland@cityoflondon.gov.uk

T: 020 7332 3047