



Cambridgeshire Winter Grant Scheme

CYP Committee
1st December 2020

Reason for late submission and update

- The report submitted to committee was based upon the latest information available at the deadline for the committee papers.
- The final DfE guidance was only received on the 24th November and this has taken some time to review.
- As the scheme has discretion for LA's to allocate to those who need support, we have been modelling potential demand to ensure we can set appropriate eligibility criteria and mobilise support from other parties to support the delivery to families.
- We have been seeking a provider to allocate supermarket vouchers.

Overview

- £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme to support children, families, and individuals over the winter. The funding will ensure support is available up until March 2021.
- Children and families will get extra support this winter to ensure vulnerable households do not go hungry or without essential items.
- This funding will be used primarily to ensure that no child goes hungry during the winter period
- Funding Allocation: **£1,459,490.26**

National Guidance

Focus on 'vulnerable households'

- At least 80% funding for households with children/young people aged under 19 (ringfenced)
- Up to 20% for households without children

Funding should be used to meet **immediate needs** – food, utility bills (incl. water), and other related essentials

- 80% food, energy and water bills for household purposes (ring-fenced)
- Up to 20% for other essentials **clearly linked to the scheme conditions**
- For example:
 - Sanitary products and soap
 - Warm clothing and blankets
 - Boiler service/repairs
 - Purchase of white goods
- A policy/framework is being finalised that outlines the approach and rationale

Support with Food

- The 'Central Food Voucher' system will be coordinated and arranged by the Countywide Hub in collaboration with schools and other education providers.
- A voucher will be sent to families automatically via a system many schools are already using. Each eligible child will receive a £15 voucher for each week of the school holidays (two weeks at Christmas and one week in February).
- Those Eligible for the voucher will be those:
 - Eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium
 - Funded two year olds
 - Eligible for Free School Meals (including those not currently on a school roll)
 - Eligible for 16+ bursary
- Before the end of the autumn term, all vouchers for Christmas will be distributed directly to families (there is no application process), and they will be supported by schools and the Countywide Hub to access them. Families can choose to opt out.
- Any families that haven't activated their Christmas voucher(s) in January will be prompted to do so, and any vouchers not activated at all will be returned to the Countywide Hub for re-distribution during February half term. Families will have the opportunity to opt-out via the school or Countywide Hub.

The Role of Wonde

- This is a system that 80% of Schools across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are using to support with their data management and to administer Free School Meal Vouchers.
- By using Wonde, this will enable the County hub to ensure any eligible household receives a voucher directly to their inbox or as a text message. It is also possible for vouchers to be printed for parents.
- For any not activated, targeted communication can be used to encourage them to activate or they can then be recalled and used again in February half term.
- Wonde already has access to the majority of the data therefore making it much easier to distribute vouchers across the County.
- Wonde offers parents a choice of 8 supermarkets to spend their vouchers.
- Two other providers were considered before selecting Wonde.

Accessing Support

- In addition to the Food Vouchers, the scheme is also available to support families and individuals with other immediate needs, including (but not limited to) other essential supplies/food, household energy and water bills, white goods, and boiler servicing and repairs.
- The Countywide Hub will provide single front door access to this support, which will be promoted through Schools, Councillors, the press and social media as part of a Winter Grant Scheme campaign. Households will also be able to continue to go directly to their local community/voluntary groups for support.
- Households supported as part of the 'Central Food Voucher' system will also be able to access this additional support via the Countywide Hub and its network.
- Many others will also be eligible for this additional support:
 - Households in receipt of income-related benefits
 - Households facing financial hardship (defined by professional judgement)
 - Families identified as 'just about managing' by Schools
 - Anyone with an Education, Health and Care Plan
 - Care Leavers
 - Young Carers
 - People with No Recourse to Public Funds status
- Any requests for support will be verified by the Countywide Hub before passing through to the relevant District/City Hub or community/voluntary organisation to identify appropriate support.

Additional Support Available

A menu of additional support options will be available beyond the 'Central Food Voucher' system. This includes:

- Providing funding to established organisations to continue or extend the support they already provide to households with, for example, food and fuel support and debt advice, for example Citizens' Advice, Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme, and Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme
- Maintaining a central fund in the Countywide Hub that trusted community groups (identified by District and City Councils) can directly award small grants.
- A grant to each District and City Council Hub to rapidly support existing local activity.

What's Next?

- Communication will be going out to families via schools and education settings and providers this week promoting the offer and ways to ask for support.
- Briefing will be held for Headteachers on the 4th December.
- A comms campaign to promote the support that is available and where it can be accessed.
- Promoting the scheme and support through existing networks e.g. Community Reference Groups, District and Parish/Town Councils.
- Monitoring take up and developing the scheme for February half term.

Recommendation

The CYP Committee is asked to:

- Agree the process for allocating the winter grant as outlined in this presentation.
- Note that the council's Section 151 Officer and Chief Executive can instigate emergency powers to award the contract for free school meals vouchers to ensure parents can receive supermarket vouchers prior to the end of term and, if such a decision is taken, will report back to the next meeting of the Committee.
- Delegate authority to the Executive Director: People and Communities to deliver the winter grant scheme.