



# Delegated decision report

## **DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

**DECISION CANNOT BE TAKEN BEFORE 11 OCTOBER 2021**

Title **COVID HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND**

Report to **CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG SKILLS**

---

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. On 6 October 2021, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) shared draft guidance and funding allocations for the Covid Household Support Fund with local authorities.
2. The expectation is that the grant should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
3. The Isle of Wight Council (IWC) have been awarded £1,131,576.08 to spend by 31 March 2022.
4. The Isle of Wight October two week half term commences on 18 October 2021, and therefore an urgent decision is required to enable the granting of funding to schools and early years education providers such that food vouchers can be provided to eligible families.

### BACKGROUND

5. On 30 September 2021, the Government announced £500m in new funding to support households most in need with food, energy and water bills, to be administered through local authorities via the Department for Work and Pensions.
6. Draft guidance was shared with local authorities on 6 October 2021. This guidance confirmed a funding allocation of £1,131,576.08 for IWC, to be spent by 31 March 2022.

7. The expectation is that the grant should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need. Local authorities are expected to engage with District Councils and can choose to work with third party organisations including schools, food banks and care organisations.
8. Authorities have the flexibility within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility and support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits.
9. At least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children.
10. Since December 2020, the Council have received DWP funding through the Covid Winter Support Grant/Covid Local Support Grant to provide free school meal children (and a wider vulnerable cohort) with food vouchers during the school holidays. Vouchers of £15 per child per week were offered up to and including the summer 2021 holiday. The IWC wider vulnerable cohort included:
  - All benefits related eligible free school meal children
  - All children open to early help services
  - All children with a social worker
  - All 2-4 year olds eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium
  - All 16-18 year olds previously eligible for free school meals
11. Given rising food and utility costs, increasing numbers of benefits eligible free school meal children and the recent reduction in Universal Credit, it is recommended that £15 per child per week vouchers are again offered to the wider vulnerable cohort for the two week October half term.
12. Based on data from July 2021, and allowing for 5% growth in eligible families, approval is sought to grant £157,470 of funding to schools and early year education providers to provide vouchers to eligible families.
13. Distributing funding rapidly for October half term in this way will provide essential financial support whilst allowing further time for the IWC and partners to consider the most effective approach to utilising the remaining funding. A recommended approach for allocation of the remaining funding will be brought to the Cabinet Member in due course.

## CONSULTATION

14. In November 2020, schools were consulted on the approach to allocating the Covid Winter grant, and funding has been passported to vulnerable families through schools and early years settings for every school holiday between December 2020 and August 2021.
15. There are a number of independent meal voucher providers in addition to options to purchase vouchers from supermarkets directly, and the process for purchasing vouchers is not complex or time consuming.

16. Whilst some education settings may prefer IWC to allocate vouchers, they are invariably best placed to pass on vouchers to families they see frequently.
17. Further consultation will be undertaken with partners, including education settings, about the approach to allocating the remaining Covid Household Support Fund.

#### FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

18. The cost of providing one £15 voucher per child per week for the wider vulnerable cohort outlined in paragraph 10 is £157,470.
19. This funding will provide vouchers for up to 5,249 children.

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. 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.

#### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

21. An Equalities Impact Assessment has previously been completed for allocating funding in this way, with a positive impact on protected characteristics.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills, approves the following by delegated decision:

22. The grant of £157,470 funding to schools, colleges and early years settings for them to purchase and provide one £15 voucher per child per week for the two-week October half term holiday. Vouchers will be provided for all children eligible for free school meals plus all children with a social worker, all children open to early help, all 2-4 year olds accessing Early Years Pupil Premium, as described in paragraph 10 of the report.

Contact Point: Suzanne Smith, Assistant Director, Children's Services,  
☎ 07793 759047 e-mail [Suzanne.smith2@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Suzanne.smith2@hants.gov.uk)

STEVE CROCKER  
*Director of Children's Services*

(CLLR) DEBBIE ANDRE  
*Cabinet Member for Children's Services,  
Education & Lifelong Skills*