

# COVID EMERGENCY FOOD AND ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES GRANT



## **Background**

On 11 June DEFRA announced an additional £63 million to be distributed to local authorities in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to coronavirus. On 10 July DEFRA published guidance and announced the allocations. Plymouth's allocation of the local authority emergency assistance grant for food and essential supplies is £343,179.73. The DEFRA guidance advises that local authorities should:

- Use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need.
- Use the funding from July onwards to meet immediate need and help those who are struggling to afford food and essentials due to COVID-19.
- Use the funding for existing schemes and other support which deliver the same outcomes and where the need is greatest.
- That when deciding how to help people, local authorities should also consider advising and providing information to people to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits – local authorities should decide which approach is suitable in your community.

The full guidance is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies>

During the emergency phase of COVID-19 while people were in Lockdown, the City Council and partners through Caring for Plymouth ensured that 909 households had access to food supplies. This was either because their government food parcel hadn't arrived (if they were Shielding), or because they had no money for food. Initially, the Council bought and delivered food directly to people; in the last few weeks of lockdown, people who had no money were referred to food banks unless they needed food in the evenings or at weekends in which case the Council delivered food.

During COVID, in total across all food providers 3,300 people were supported at the height of the programme in June 2020 providing approximately 70,000 meals. Over £10,000 per week of food was purchased by local organisations (from Defra funding) in addition to support from FareShare and Trussel Trust.

The continued impact of COVID-19 will mean that increasing numbers of people are expected to find themselves in financial difficulty and thus may have periods when they have no food. Unemployment and the number of benefit claimants is set to double by the end of the year – which could mean that there will be over 17,000 people on JobSeekers Allowance, Tax Credits or Universal Credit (including in-work support) by December 2020. It is estimated that one third of claimants have used food aid organisations during the first half of 2020, so demand could be at around 6-7,000 people requesting support by the end of the year.

In addition, it is a Government expectation that Local Authorities will have a Plan for food during a further lockdown in an outbreak of COVID-19. The government will not be providing food parcels to Shielded people in a new lockdown, instead Local Authorities need to be able to support people to access food. This funding is an opportunity to build resilience within the local food sector as well as to put in place infrastructure to enable us to respond to both a short term lockdown and to the longer term financial impact.

**Target audience for the grant:**

In general to ensure that food and essential supplies are available to all those in need. Specifically, the government guidance suggests the following groups but Local Authorities are able to target other groups that they identify as needing help in their local area:

- a. Support the newly unemployed and those seeking universal credit
- b. Support families that qualify for Free School Meals. Over the summer holiday period this would be limited to support for essentials that are not food due to the government's COVID Summer Food Fund.
- c. Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) such as immigrants where there are community care needs, they have serious health problems or there is a risk to a child's wellbeing

**Aims of the Plymouth Scheme:**

To build the capacity of the food sector in the city to ensure that people who are struggling to afford food and other essentials because of the impact of COVID are able to access it.

In the event of a future local lockdown, the sector would be able to respond and provide food to those who were referred by the City Council and partners as part of Caring for Plymouth.

To provide advice and information to people to ensure they can move away from relying on short term food aid, for example: debt advice and benefit claims, support to access the Council's Skills Hubs and employment advice and information on a range of other help and support such as the Healthy Start Scheme – around 45% of Plymouth families are not claiming up to £10/week in vouchers to spend on milk, fruit and veg.

**Recommendations:****To use the funding from September 2020 to March 2021 as follows:**

- I. Contract with Food Plymouth to co-ordinate and manage a depot on behalf of a collaborative alliance for the sector.
  - (i) To work in partnership with FairShare, Food Plymouth and Provide Devon to facilitate co-ordination of all the foodbanks and other informal food aid organisations to work collectively to reach everyone in need. This will be particularly important if there should be another COVID-19 outbreak.
  - (ii) The work will involve co-ordination of food donations, buying food and essentials in the most effective and efficient way possible, storage and distribution of food. Working with the South West Food Hub CIC to optimise opportunities for local SME participation and using economies of scale.
  - (iii) To ensure in the longer term that monitoring from all agencies is co-ordinated so that activity can be used to support a business case, working with Food Plymouth to generate a sustainable food management market in Plymouth and a sustainable income for food aid.
  
2. To open a grants scheme which will have the following aims:
  - (i) To increase the capacity of smaller and grassroots organisations who helped to distribute food to people during COVID-19 to cope with demand, in particular, during a further outbreak of COVID-19.
  - (ii) To provide funding to organisations who are able to reach particularly vulnerable groups of people including: the newly unemployed and those applying for Universal Credit, people who are Shielding in the event of a local lockdown, the homeless,

frail older people, families with young children on free school meals, Refugees, Asylum Seekers with no recourse to public funds and the financially insecure. To also ensure that anchor organisations such as Wellbeing and Family Hubs can distribute food to local people and families who are struggling. All of this funding will be awarded with agreed outcomes, for example, to increase the opening hours of the food banks and the number of times that people can access support.

- (iii) To support organisations who are developing self-help approaches to food,
  - (iv) To fund organisations who give information and advice on benefits, finances and job search and to support take-up of grant schemes, for example, Healthy Start for families with young children
3. To fund Advice Plymouth to increase capacity in their debt and benefits advice both on the phone or by video link to people accessing food or essential supplies. There will be a dedicated phone line and additional staff and an active high profile ‘marketing’ campaign to ensure that people who need it are actively referred for financial advice and this will be linked to an awareness raising campaign targeted at organisations’ staff and volunteers. People will also be linked into the Council’s Skills Hubs and other support.

An element of the fund will be retained by Plymouth City Council to provide food in future COVID-19 emergency situations, for example, in the evenings or weekends when other services are closed and to ensure that the Council has the capacity to lead the response during another COVID outbreak.

**Table 1. Emergency Food Aid - Breakdown of Funding**

Element	Funding / £
Local Authority administration and infrastructure costs for co-ordinating the COVID Food Plan required by government	13,822.14
Local Authority contribution to additional provision of community meals during COVID lockdown	33,973.52
Local Authority purchase of food, staff and contingency budget for future emergency response	50,539.07
Fair Shares Co-ordination and storage of food	85,000.00
Grants Scheme	125,000.00
Advice Plymouth increase capacity for benefits and debt advice, marketing campaign, links to Council’s Skills Hubs etc	34,845.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>343,179.73</b>

## **Appendix I: Grants Scheme**

### **Eligibility**

Grants will only go to organisations not to individuals. Grants will be given to constituted groups, Charities and social enterprises who can provide food and essential items to individuals and families in need either through buying, storage or distribution.

- a. Open to any organisation that can help to achieve the aims and objectives listed
- b. The organisation will need to be constituted, not for profit and have a bank account

**Delivery**

- a. Web-page on POD
- b. PCC Email address for information/help
  - i. FAQs
  - ii. Record keeping
- c. Use PCC Firmstep for Grant Application and distribution.
- d. Authorisation panel membership to be decided – will need to include a minimum of Food Plymouth, the Director for Public Health, Families and Children representative, Economic Development Representative to provide business support.

**Further information for grant applicants:**

- Maximum amount of grant awarded will be £10k
- The grant will be awarded in two stages e.g. October to December 2020, January to March 2021 on receipt of initial completed 3 month data returns
- The money to be spent within 6 months by March 2021
- We expect applicants to demonstrate how this funding will provide additional support to those in need through an expanded service or an increase in numbers. The funding will not pay for current levels of activity