

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT GRANT – FOOD VOUCHERS

Contract Award Report

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to describe the requirement for the Local Authority (LA) to distribute Household Support Grant funding to vulnerable families, and to recommend the award of a contract to support this aim.

The recommendation is to award a contract to Wonde Limited to deliver circa eVoucher codes during the October, December, February and Easter school holidays, up to a value of £1m.

This support is needed for children at risk of going hungry during school holidays. Wonde have been selected by a mini-tender procurement process but due to the timing of the government confirmation of funding, now need to mobilise at speed to be able to provide vouchers for the October half term which starts on the 25th October. The details of the procurement process and outcome are contained in the confidential paper Evaluation Summary Food Vouchers.

BACKGROUND

Since autumn 2020 the Government has awarded funding to local authorities to support families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals with the costs of food and fuel, due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. This has included schemes like the Covid Winter Support Grant and now the Household Support Grant.

Plymouth City Council (PCC) has had some flexibility around how the wider grant funding is administered and this has included food vouchers and grants to Third Party Organisations (TPOs) and to vulnerable groups via small grants schemes.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

The guidance from the DWP states that the Council must ensure that:

- i) at least 50% of the grant is allocated to support households that include:
 - a person who will be under the age of 19 as at 31st March 2022, or
 - a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit is paid or free school meals are provided during the Grant Period, and
- ii) up to 50% of the grant is used to assist other households, and
- b) the Authority is to ensure that the grant is primarily allocated to support with the costs of food, energy (for heating, lighting and cooking), water (for household purposes, including sewerage) and other essential living needs in accordance with the Scheme guidance.
- c) in exceptional circumstances of genuine emergency, the Authority may allocate grant funds to support with housing costs as set out in the Scheme guidance.

FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

The Household Support Grant is entirely funded by DWP – the value of the grant for Plymouth is £2,294,796.82. The food vouchers comprise part of the funding (approx. £1m) and a plan is being developed which will set out the Council's plans for the total grant amount. This also has to be reported to the DWP for transparency.

RECOMMENDATION AND DECISION

In order to support the health and well-being of the most disadvantaged children and continued engagement in their education, this report recommends that a delegated decision is taken to award a contract to Wonde Limited for the provision and administration of eVoucher codes at a value of £15 per week, redeemable at supermarkets by eligible families.