

# HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND – FOOD VOUCHERS

## Contract Award Report

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to describe the recommendation for the Local Authority (LA) to distribute Household Support Fund (HSF) monies 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 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 were previously selected by a mini-tender procurement process and provided this service during a previous round of HSF. However, due to the timing of the government confirmation of round 3 funding, it is now necessary to mobilise a provider at speed to be able to provide vouchers for the October half term which starts on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

### 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 energy, due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent increase in the cost of living. This has included schemes like the Covid Winter Support Grant and now the Household Support Fund.

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 for round 3 of HSF is that there will be no ring-fence of any proportion of funding for any particular cohort of people. There is however an expectation that the fund should be used to support households in the most need as identified by the Local Authority.

There is data on food insecurity in the city from research carried out during December 2021 and January 2022 by Transform Research. The research has found significant numbers of households in the city were in the low (8%) and very low (12%) food security categories. While the finding that 20% of Plymouth households are food insecure (either with very low or low security) is clearly of great concern, the research found that levels of insecurity were even higher in some types of households. Specifically, the impact of the pandemic on food security had been most severe in households with:

- Income below £20,000 pa:
- 1+ person with mental health condition:
- Children present: and/or
- Single adult households.

Households with children/young people were significantly more likely to be experiencing food insecurity (28%) than those without (16%). Nearly half of lone adult households with children/young people said that they were experiencing insecurity (45%), making them among the most likely of all groups to need food support. In addition, those households with more children/young people were significantly more likely to be experiencing food insecurity: half (50%) of those with 3+ children/young

people compared with a quarter (24%) of those with 1 or 2 and just one in six (16%) of those without any.

Households with children are therefore a key target group for receiving HSF support.

This contract award covers specifically the provision of meal vouchers to children in the school holidays, but there will be further recommendations regarding spend from the HSF fund on other cohorts identified as vulnerable.

## **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 currently 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 the Council approves the award of a contract to Wonde Limited to deliver eVoucher codes at an estimated total cost of £1 million, to provide food vouchers to cover the October 2022 half term, Christmas 2022 school holidays, February 2023 half term and Easter 2023 school holidays.