

**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**9 September 2021**

**Report of the Executive Director of Childrens Services**

**Covid Local Support Grants (CLSG) - Summer**

**1. Divisions Affected**

1.1 Countywide.

**2. Key Decision**

2.1 This is not a key decision.

**3. Purpose**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to note the urgent decision taken by the Executive Director of Children's Services on 2 July 2021 to approve additional spending plans for the Derbyshire County Council allocation of the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG). This scheme is an extension of the CLSG for vulnerable families which previously ran until 20 June 2021. The extension now extends the scheme up to 30 September 2021. The urgent officer decision report is attached for information in Appendix 2.

**4. Information and Analysis**

4.1 On 21 June 2021, the Government announced the extension to COVID Local Support Grant with an additional £160 million funding which will

be available nationally from 21 June. CLSG will be allocated to local authorities on the same basis, using the population of each authority weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation.

- 4.2 The aim of this extension to the CLSG is to give vulnerable households peace of mind as COVID restrictions are eased by helping those who need it to have food on the table and other essentials. This funding will ensure that County Councils and Unitary Authorities can support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. Derbyshire County Council's allocation is £2,052,728.61.

## **5. Alternative Options Considered**

- 5.1 To not extend the scheme. This is not recommended as children, families and vulnerable adults would not receive the benefits from the scheme. No other options were considered.

## **6. Implications**

Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 The following background reports and published documents are available to aid decision making:
- Executive Directors Urgent Decision – COVID Winter Grant Scheme dated 2 December 2020.
  - Cabinet Report - Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services – Urgent Decision taken by the Executive Director of Children's Services COVID Winter Grant – dated 14 January 2021.
  - COVID Winter Grant Scheme Update – dated 26 February 2021
  - Cabinet Report - Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services – Urgent Decision taken by the Executive Director of Children's Services COVID Winter Grant Extension– dated. 15 April 2021
  - Cabinet Report - Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services – Urgent Decision taken by the Executive Director of Children's Services Covid Local Support Grant – dated 17 June 2021.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1- Implications.
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - Urgent Decision Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services 2 July 2021.

## **9. Recommendation(s)**

- 9.1 That Cabinet:
  - a) Notes the urgent decision taken by the Executive Director of Children's Services on 2 July 2021 to approve additional spending plans for the Derbyshire County Council allocation of the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG).

## **10. Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

The Covid Local Support Grant Delivery Plans had to be submitted to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) no later than 16 July 2021 and therefore an urgent officer decision was required to secure funding and safeguard the interests of the County Council. Therefore, timescales for the normal decision-making protocols has not been possible.

## **11. Is it necessary to waive the call-in period?**

- 11.1 No.

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**Contact details:** [sarah.edwards@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.edwards@derbyshire.gov.uk)

### **Implications**

#### **a) Financial**

The revenue budget will be adjusted to reflect this ring-fenced grant and held by Children Services and receipts and expenditure will be monitored through the usual financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.

It must be noted, as per the Cabinet report 17 June 2021, it is the intention of Derbyshire County Council to ensure that all of the grant directly reaches vulnerable members of the community, consequently the Council will not take administrative costs from the grant unless there is remaining unused grant at the close of the scheme to prevent unused funds having to be returned or become unclaimed.

#### **b) Legal**

The Council's Constitution provides that "notwithstanding any other provision of the Constitution Executive Directors shall have the power, after discussion, if practicable, with the Leader of the Council or the relevant Cabinet Member or Chair, to take such actions deemed to be necessary and expedient in matters requiring urgent consideration and which, because of the timescale involved, or the need to safeguard the interests of the County Council, cannot be dealt with by submission to the next following meeting of the Council, Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committee."

The Improvement and Scrutiny Procedure Rules states:

"13(6) The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by Cabinet is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public interest. All reports recommending that decisions be taken should say whether or not it is proposed that call-in be waived. The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public, shall state whether in the opinion of the decision-making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in. The Chairman of the appropriate Improvement and Scrutiny Committee should agree both the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

### **c) Statutory and Policy Implications**

This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR URGENT DECISION  
COVID Local Support Grant – Summer**

Head of Service Submitting request	Sarah Edwards, Head of Service – Programmes, Commissioning and Transformation, Childrens Services)
Date of Submission	2 July 2021
Date submitted to Executive Director	2 July 2021
Executive Director Decision	Approved
Executive Director Approval	 Signed:  Helen Jones
Date of Executive Director Decision	2 July 2021

# **Urgent Decision Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services**

## **DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**2 July 2021**

### **Report to the Strategic Director for Children's Services**

#### **COVID Local Support Grant - Summer**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to ask the Executive Director for an urgent decision to approve additional spending plans for the Derbyshire County Council allocation of the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG). This scheme is an extension of the CLSG for vulnerable families which previously ran until 20 June 2021. The extension now extends the scheme up to 30 September 2021. The CLSG Delivery Plan attached with Enclosures at end of this report, must be submitted to DWP no later than 16 July 2021, and therefore time for the normal decision-making protocols has not been possible.

#### **Information**

2. On 21 June 2021, the Government announced the extension to COVID Local Support Grant with an additional £160 million funding which will be available nationally from 21 June. CLSG will be allocated to local authorities on the same basis, using the population of each authority weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation.
3. The aim of this extension to the CLSG is to give vulnerable households peace of mind as COVID restrictions are eased by helping those who need it to have food on the table and other essentials. This funding will ensure that County Councils and Unitary Authorities can support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. Derbyshire County Council's allocation is £2,052,728.61.
4. The CLSG has the same eligibility criteria as Covid Winter Grant Scheme and uses the same reporting template (incorporating the Statement of Grant Usage Management Information (MI) Return). A new summary report setting out how the authority intends to spend the additional grant is attached with enclosures at the end of this report and this must be submitted to DWP by 16 July 2021.

5. The grant conditions remain the same with the exception of a new rule that underspends from May 2021 can be brought forward. However, it is unlikely that there will be a significant underspend from the last tranche of CLSG voucher issue.
6. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will continue to provide funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities, under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children who are particularly affected by the pandemic. This will include some families who normally have access to Free School Meals during term time. County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England will have the ability to deliver the scheme through vouchers or grants. The CLSG will run from 21 June 2021 to 30 September 2021.
7. The Local Authority can determine eligibility in their area and target their support within the scope of the grant conditions:
8. Given the size of the grant that Derbyshire is eligible to receive for this next tranche and the short timescale for spending the grant it is proposed that a the majority of the grant is spent on the provision of food vouchers for families meeting local criteria of vulnerabilities, those families where children are in receipt of free school meals due to low income of the household and to care leavers across the Summer term holidays. In addition to this, an allocation of up to £100,000 (approx. 5% of the budget) will be set aside to work with third party organisations to support vulnerable adults (including reasonable administrative costs). No allowance would be set aside for administrative costs but it should be noted that reasonable administrative costs could be claimed if there is an underspend in the budget when the final account is prepared in October 2021. For reference, the administrative costs claimed in facilitating distribution of the three tranches of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme covering Christmas, February half term and Easter was £112,760. Most of this cost is internal staff time.

### **Families with Children**

9. It is recommended that the scheme continues in same manner as that contained within the Cabinet Report dated 17 June 2021, with the continued distribution of a voucher to the eligible cohort. However, in line with the reduction in size of the grant the total voucher/s per eligible child will be £80 based on issue of vouchers to 27,000 eligible children. The rationale for the different voucher values is set out in paragraph 11.

## **Vulnerable Adults Scheme**

10. Discussions with Adult Social Care and Health colleagues, who in turn have discussed with existing third party organizations who delivered against either the CWGS and/or CLGS, confirm that the support measures under the CWGS/CLSG have been well received and effective in offering support to vulnerable households impacted over the winter/spring. Alternative extended provision is being made available through the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (one of the channels for the CWGS vulnerable households support) using other Public Health Covid Related funding, so DDF will not require funding on this occasion.
11. Age UK Derby and Derbyshire, and Derbyshire Careers Association have indicated a potential need and ongoing opportunity to support vulnerable older people, and those with caring responsibilities. Older people are a client group that is under-represented in the applicant profile for Derbyshire Discretionary Fund. Given the short time frame available, a grant fund of £100,000 would be a manageable allocation for these third-party organisations to disperse and ASCH colleagues have offered to work to extend existing CWGS/CLGS arrangements to monitor this.
12. In addition, it is proposed to replicate the CLGS provision to Care Leavers aged 18 – 25 and these are included in the voucher costs figures in this report.

## **Options for the value of the vouchers**

13. It should be noted that on each of the four previous rounds of allocation of vouchers at Christmas, February half terms, Easter and May half term an average of 20% of vouchers have not been redeemed. Despite considerable effort to contact parents/carers sending out reminders to recipients by email and text and extending the expiry date of the vouchers not all recipients have chosen to redeem their vouchers. A piece of work is ongoing to establish any reasons for this. This has resulted in an underspend in all three voucher issues at Christmas, half term and Easter. Each time any underspend has been released to allocate to the next tranche of vouchers for vulnerable families. However, the Council has been advised that this is the last CLSG scheme and to avoid the risk of this situation occurring again and the Council potentially having to underclaim against the full potential grant allocation one option would be to issued vouchers of a higher value on the assumption that there will only be an 80% take up of vouchers. Two options have been consider regarding the total voucher value - £90 or £80 and the implication of each is set out in Table 1 below for consideration by SMT. Given the length of the summer holiday over six full weeks and the higher value of the voucher further

consideration has been given to the possibility of issuing multiple vouchers. It is proposed that multiple vouchers will be issued to eligible families to the total agreed value spread across the summer holiday period.

**Table1: Implication of the proposed different voucher values**

<b>Number of vouchers to be issued</b>		27000					
<b>Total budget available to Childrens</b>		1,952,728					
<b>Total budget available to Adults</b>		£100,000					
<b>Total budget available</b>		<b>£2,052,728</b>					
		<i>Assumptions based on 80% redemption rate</i>			<i>Potential over/under spend</i>		
<b>Voucher value £</b>	<b>Total spend</b>	<b>Actual cost</b>	<b>No of vouchers redeemed</b>	<b>Potential under-spend</b>	<b>85% voucher redeemed</b>	<b>100% voucher redeemed</b>	<b>Risks</b>
<b>£90</b>	£2,430,000	£1,944,000	21,600	Under-spend £8,728	Over-spend £112,771	Over-spend £477,271	There is a risk of a small budget under-spend based on pattern of voucher redemption (80%in all previous rounds) or a significant over-spend of £477k if there is 100% take-up
<b>£80</b>	£2,160,000	£172,800	21,600	Under-spend £224,728	Under-spend £116,728	Over-spend £207,271	There is a risk of a small budget under-spend based on 80% take up or an over-spend of £207k if there is 100% take-up

The implications of the different voucher values are set out in the table above and members of SMT are asked to consider the risks and benefits of issuing vouchers valued at £90 or £80 per child /care leaver. It is recommended that the vouchers are valued at £80.

Please note in either scenario no administration time is accounted for and this is a cost to the Council. However, if there are underspend this can be off-set by the potential to claim reasonable administrative costs.

### **Additional Information**

14. It has been agreed that surrounding local authorities will continue to support eligible children schooled in their area regardless of their home address; it is recommended this remains the same for Derbyshire County Council. Therefore, children who go to school in Derbyshire but live outside the County are included in this calculation in keeping with other Local Authority plans.
15. The Derbyshire scheme will be supporting individual children (eg. one voucher per child) within the family group as opposed to awarding the same grant to each family regardless of size.

### **Other Options Considered**

16. To not extend the scheme. This is not recommended as children, families and vulnerable adults would not receive the benefits from the scheme. No other options were considered.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

17. The recommendations support the conditions and purpose of the grant as set by government whilst meeting local priorities and have proved to be successful to date.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

19. The revenue budget will be adjusted to reflect this ring-fenced grant and held by Children Services and receipts and expenditure will be monitored through the usual financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.

It must be noted, as per the Cabinet report 17 June 2021, it is the intention of Derbyshire County Council to ensure that all of the grant directly reaches vulnerable members of the community, consequently the Council will not take administrative costs from the grant unless there is remaining unused grant at the close of the scheme to prevent unused funds having to be returned or become unclaimed.

## **Legal Considerations**

20. The Council's Constitution provides that "notwithstanding any other provision of the Constitution Executive Directors shall have the power, after discussion, if practicable, with the Leader of the Council or the relevant Cabinet Member or Chair, to take such actions deemed to be necessary and expedient in matters requiring urgent consideration and which, because of the timescale involved, or the need to safeguard the interests of the County Council, cannot be dealt with by submission to the next following meeting of the Council, Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Committee."

21. The Improvement and Scrutiny Procedure Rules states:  
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## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

22. The following background reports and published documents are available to aid decision making:

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### **Key Decision**

23. Yes.

### **Call-in**

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report?

24. Yes

25. Councillor Tony Kemp, Chair of Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – People has approved the waiver of the call in due to the urgent nature of the decision required; has agreed special urgency applies and the notice of key decision is not required; and supports the action being taken.

### **Officer's Recommendation(s)**

26. That the Executive Director:
- Approves the overarching spending plan for the Covid Local Support Grant for Derbyshire County Council for the Summer period as detailed above
  - Approves the recommendation to issue vouchers with a value of £80 taking into account the risks and benefits set out in table 1 in paragraph 11.

Sarah Edwards,  
Head of Service - Programmes,  
Commissioning and Transformation  
Childrens Services



2021 06 25 CLSG  
Delivery Plans quest