

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Decision to be taken by: Sarah Scott, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health

Pursuant to an Authorisation from: Cllr Harman, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities on 30 November 2021:

In view of the possibility that the Department of Health and Social Care may deem it necessary to allocate future Practical Support Grant payments to Gloucestershire County Council for the purposes set out in the Self Isolation Framework, it is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities:

4. delegates authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Public Health to allocate any additional funds, not exceeding £250,000 in value, for the purposes set out in the Self Isolation Framework. The allocation of such funding will be conditional on procurement and legal advice being obtained before it is allocated in order to ensure that it complies with subsidy control regime and public procurement law requirements.

Report title: Practical Support Grant Allocation to the Hartpury University, additional funds for the VCS Prevention Grant and GCC Children's Directorate for the provision of practical and emotional support for people self isolating as a result of Covid-19

The decision	<p>Having consulted with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities:</p> <p><u>DECISIONS</u></p> <p>To allocate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. £39, 645 from the Practical Support Grant (described in the background section of this report) by way of a one-off grant to Hartpury University for the purpose of ensuring that it is able to provide adequate support for its students who are self-isolating due to contracting Covid 19.2. £64,000 from the Practical Support Grant by way of a one-off grant to the established Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)Grant scheme for the purpose of funding the provision of practical and emotional support for individuals who are self isolating in communities across Gloucestershire3. £42, 184 from the Practical Support Grant to Gloucestershire County Council's Children and Families Directorate for the purpose of supporting Children and Young People in need of Information and Communication
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	Technology (ICT) whilst self isolating due to contracting Covid 19.
Background documents	ICM Decision (30/11/21): Practical Support Grant allocation to VCS, district councils and universities in Gloucestershire for the provision of practical and emotional support for people self isolating as a result of Covid-19
Reasons for the decision	The Department of Health and Social Care has provided funding to top tier local authorities to ensure that people who are required to self-isolate as a result of Covid-19 are provided with the necessary practical and emotional support.
Resource implications	Following the Cabinet Member decision on 30 November 2021 regarding the allocation of £921,217.10 to funding recipients, a further £151,461.15 was allocated to the Council by the Department of Health and Social Care in December 2021. Total Practical Support Grant received was £1,072,678.25. The payments to the Universities were £5,632 greater than set out in the ICM Decision (30/11/21).
Who has been consulted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cllr Harman, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities until 22 May 2022, was consulted prior to the decision being taken on 28 February 2022 ▪ Cllr Nick Housden, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities from 23 May 2022 was briefed on this report on 5 July ▪ Internal support services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal Services ○ Finance ○ Communications ○ Strategic Procurement
What were their comments?	
<p>Cllr Harman, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, was supportive of the decision.</p> <p>Legal Services: Drafting advice in connection with this report has been provided to the report's author.</p>	
Background/Context	
<p>The Practical Support Grant is for use by councils to provide support to people who have been told to self-isolate to carry out essential tasks or for offering social or emotional support.</p> <p>Practical support funding can only be used to deliver practical, social and emotional support to people who are self-isolating as positive cases or close contacts. This funding cannot be used to deliver financial support.</p>	

The Local Authority practical support fund is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the varying needs of individual local areas. The funding can be used dynamically and creatively to support self-isolation through practical measures in the most appropriate way locally.

The scope of the grant is to support councils in providing a triaging process and a non-financial support package for individuals who are required to self-isolate and need practical, social, or emotional support to do so. For example, in accessing food where they are unable to rely on family, friends or other support networks. Additionally, the grant enables support to people who do not have alternative support networks in carrying out essential tasks and social / emotional support.

Funding can be used to deliver direct services or to fund delivery partners, including VCS organisations. It is expected that the funding is used both to respond to an immediate demand and to maintain a contingency support offer, even when demand is low.

The grant conditions state that in two tier areas, the grant is conditional on upper tier authorities working closely with their lower tier partners and ensuring those partners are given opportunities to deliver the outcomes this grant is meant to support where delivery by those partners would be the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivery. In those cases, it is essential that upper tier authorities provide sufficient resources to lower tier authorities within the former's allocated funding so that the latter can carry out any responsibilities that they are asked to undertake.

In Gloucestershire, people who require support whilst self isolating can request help and support through the Community Help Hub portal or by going directly to their district council. These requests are then processed by the relevant district council. The district council then brokers support from the voluntary and community organisation that is best placed to meet the identified need. Allocating a proportion of the grant to the VCS and district councils will enable this process to continue to work effectively.

£64,000 of the funding will be distributed to the VCS through an established grant scheme which exists to ensure that VCS organisations can continue their support for vulnerable people and those at highest risk whilst reinforcing the Covid guidance messages and measures to minimise the spread of disease, with grants to any single organisation not exceeding £20,000 in value.

The Universities in Gloucestershire have taken on responsibility for ensuring that their students are able to self-isolate when required through the provision of meals and emotional support services. Allocating a proportion of the grant to universities will enable them to continue to provide this service to the student population of Gloucestershire. The Hartpury University incurred additional costs supporting their students to self isolate.

Gloucestershire County Council has a responsibility to help disadvantaged children enhance their learning including but not limited to children in need and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Provision of ICT equipment for self isolating children will constitute a positive intervention with families with low income and high levels of poverty and deprivation. Covid-19 lockdown/ restrictions and negative economic impacts have exacerbated the inequalities existing within those families, making more evident the gaps in access to services, education and digital facilities. An Officer decision was taken on the 28th June 2021 to allocate funds from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for this purpose. It is recommended that a portion of that funding is allocated from the Practical Support Grant in order to ensure that the full

grant is spent and to release funds back into the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to be allocated to with a broader remit.

Alternative options considered and why they were rejected

Not to distribute the funding to Gloucestershire VCS, Hartpury University and for the purchase of ICT equipment for school children.

This is not recommended as it is both against government guidance and could impede the ability to offer adequate support to those required to self isolate.

Risk Analysis

Given that support provided to VCS organisations and Hartpury University by local authorities using the Practical Support Fund Ring-Fenced Grant may be subject to the UK's international obligations on subsidy control, the council is required comply with relevant subsidy control rules when making allocations of such grant.

The council considers that the proposed measures are a proportionate and appropriate means of achieving the specific policy objectives set out in the Self Isolation Framework, namely, to provide practical and emotional support to those need to self-isolate thereby reducing the risk of transmission. It is the council's view that these objectives cannot be readily achieved through other means and on this basis, the risk of the council receiving an order to repay the proposed grant funding under subsidy control rules is considered to be small.

Moreover, the council is satisfied that:

1. The market would not provide the activities for which the grant funding is intended, ie, there are no rival suppliers in the market who might be interested in tendering for a contract to provide such activities.
2. The proposed arrangements are "true grants" in that they are no-strings/unconditional arrangements (ie, they do not contain strict qualification criteria nor obligations to pay back money if certain targets are not reached).
3. The grants will be given to truly local organisations only.
4. No more than £332,000 shall be given to any single beneficiary over a rolling 3 year period.

Equalities considerations

The impact on all the protected characteristics has been considered and no particular disproportionate impacts were found. The intended beneficiaries of this support could include individuals from across all of the protected characteristics.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed? Yes - here	
Has any conflict of interest been declared by any Cabinet Member consulted on the decision? <i>The council's Monitoring Officer should be consulted, in the first instance, if any conflict of interest is declared by a Cabinet Member.</i>	Yes/No
If any conflict of interest declared, was a dispensation granted by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Council?	Date of dispensation:
Does this decision report form or any supporting papers provided contain confidential or exempt information? <i>(Refer to Democratic Services Unit for advice if necessary)</i>	No <i>If Yes, please provide details of document(s) that are confidential or exempt</i>
Does this decision need to be published on the GCC website? <i>(Refer to guidance on "Executive Decisions taken by Officers").</i>	Yes
<p>In coming to this decision I have given due and full regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") by reference to the law itself and also the relevant Equality Impact Assessment, which was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Act.</p> <p>Having fully considered all available information, I have decided to reject any alternative options and take the recommended decision(s), for the reasons set out in this report.</p> <p>Signed</p>  <p>Name: Sarah Scott Title: Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health</p>	
Date: 4.7.22 (following a decision on 28.2.22 but published retrospectively)	
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