

**Children, Education and Families PDS Committee
10th March 2021**

Agenda Item 4b– Questions to the Portfolio Holder

Questions from Alisa Igoe

1. Could you kindly explain how Bromley Council have contacted families needing grants from the “Bromley Winter Grant Fund”, where they are suffering the effects of Covid deprivation yet not in receipt of benefits and especially how families with pre-school age children are able to access the £149,000 in the Hardship Fund?

Reply:

The Hardship Fund sits within the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio. I am informed that the Hardship Fund within the Covid Winter Fund Scheme has been well publicised including through a news release and the Newshopper. Families, including those with pre-school aged children, are able to access and receive grants through the Hardship Fund element of the Covid Winter Fund. In terms of assisting those that haven't been able to access benefits, Housing, Planning and Regeneration Officers made as many agencies aware as possible, including the Department for Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice Bureau. Additionally, there were notifications to all housing associations, Bromley Winter Night Shelter, Thames Reach as well as Bromley's own housing service, which includes Money Advice and Support and Resettlement, who can target vulnerable households including those that may not have access to income currently. Officers also sought to promote the scheme through the Early Intervention Service, Mind, Age UK, Probation Service and local churches.

2. Bromley guidelines state families with school age children should access the government's Covid Winter Grant fund by approaching their Bromley school. Could you kindly confirm these families are able to access and receive grants for needs other than food vouchers (as stated in the government guidance above) and, are families made aware this includes paying utility bills?

Reply:

The Hardship Fund sits within the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio. I am informed that families are able to access and receive grants for needs other than food vouchers, including utility bills through the Hardship Fund element of the Covid Winter Fund. Housing, Planning and Regeneration Officers widely publicised the scheme, including through the Department for Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice Bureau. Additionally, there were notifications to all housing associations, Bromley Winter Night Shelter, Thames Reach as well as Bromley's own housing service, which includes Money Advice and Support and Resettlement, who can target vulnerable

households including those that may not have access to income currently. Officers also sought to promote the scheme through the Early Intervention Service, Mind, Age UK, Probation Service and local churches.