

COVID Grants Commentary for CEF PDS

1. General Grant - £4,405k 2020/21/£TBC 2021/22

During 2020/21, the Government provided 4 tranches of emergency funding to support local authorities through Covid-19, with the Council receiving £22,877k. An additional amount of £7,795k was also allocated for 2021/22 to further address ongoing financial pressures, resulting in a total amount received of £30,672k.

This grant is not ringfenced and local authorities have discretion as to how this grant is allocated to address Covid-19 pressures that they identify in their boroughs. In 2020/21, a total of £16,371k was applied across all portfolio where the financial impacts of Covid were not met from other ringfenced Covid grants.

CEF £4,405k in 2020/21 across all the portfolio covering additional staffing, equipment and activities that were not covered by other specific COVID grants. The allocation for 2021/22 for CEF has yet to be confirmed, but is likely to be a reduced amount from 2020/21

2. Income Loss Compensation Grant - £254k/£TBC 2021/22

In addition to the general grant, the Government provided for a grant scheme designed to compensate for irrecoverable losses of qualifying transactional income from sales, fees and charges. The schemes provided for the whole of 2020/21 but only first quarter of 2021/22. The amount of grant does not meet eligible income losses in full, and local authorities have been required to meet the first 5% of budgeted losses, with grant then paid at 75% of the resultant net loss.

Based on this formula, CEF were able to tap into £254k of this grant in 2020/21 in areas such as Adult Education, Youth Service, Nursery provision, Education Welfare and Education Psychologists.

There is also grant available for 2021/22 but this has yet to be confirmed and finalised.

3. Contain Outbreak Management Fund - £1,977k 2020/21/£3,034k 2021/22 provisional

The Contain Outbreak Management Fund is another un-ringfenced grant intended to provide support in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19.

The 2020/21 allocation was spent on increased costs in Home and Hospital placements, cost of individual placement breakdowns, additional placement and the associated costs and costs of staff used for contract tracing/volunteering.

Provisionally there has been £3,034k allocated to CEF in 2021/22. This expenditure includes additional temporary cost of staffing in areas such as the RAS, MASH and safeguarding teams, additional placements costs, additional short break packages in CWD and removing the waiting list in the early intervention service.

An initial allocation of £3,731k was agreed under delegated authority to cover various pressures across all departments arising as a result of the pandemic as set out in the table below:

4. Covid Local Support Grant – 2021/22 - £887k

This grant was introduced on the 17th April 2021 and continued to the 30th September 2021 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food and utility bills (heating, cooking, lighting) and water for household purposes (including drinking, washing, cooking, central heating, sewerage and sanitary purposes), or other related essentials. There were certain criteria that Bromley had to meet which were:

- a) at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support households with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other households experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, poverty during the pandemic. This may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits.
- b) at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills for household purposes (including drinking, washing, cooking, central heating, and sanitary purposes) and sewerage. Within this condition there is flexibility about the proportion of support allocated to food and to bills.
- c) up to 20% of the total funding can be used to provide support with other essentials clearly linked to the scheme conditions (including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access food, energy and water.

The majority of the grant was spent on food vouchers that were distributed through schools during the school holidays targeted at children eligible for Pupil Premium and Children in Need (including children subject to a child protection plan), with the remaining amount used by Housing through the Welfare fund for food, utilities and other essentials to support families.

The total allocation of grant was £887k. However £14k of this was spent in the Housing Portfolio so the CEF spend was £873k on food vouchers.

5. Holiday Activities and Food Programme - £881k – 2021/22

The grant announced in November 2020, provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children. The programme covers the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. 10% of the total funding allocated could be associated with running the programme, with the remaining 90% to be used to fund places for FSM eligible children.

As Bromley could evidence that they were offering the programme comprehensively across the full geographical area and were fully meeting demand from free school meal eligible children in the area, 15% of the funding could be used to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but who are considered by the local authority as vulnerable or in need of this provision. For example, this may include children assessed as being in need,

looked-after children, children with an EHC plan (education, health and care), children assessed as otherwise vulnerable, or children living in areas of high deprivation. Activities have taken place during the holidays such as football coaching, arts and craft and musical activities. 10,382 individual places were taken up in the summer holidays, reaching nearly 2,000 individual children.

Expenditure is ongoing and there will be a final reconciliation of spend in due course. Current estimates are that £365k has been spent on this grant to date.

In July 2021 there was an announcement of an additional contingency provision of £72k making the total grant £881k.

On the 27th October 2021 in the budget, it was announced that this funding stream would continue into 2022/23 financial year. Further announcements on the detailed funding levels will be sent by government in due course.

6. Covid Winter Grant Scheme – 2020/21 - £754k

The grant began in December 2020 to support those most in need with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials. There were certain criteria that Bromley had to meet which were:

- a) at least 80% of the total funding was ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals.
- b) at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items.

The grant was for the period of the 1st December to the 31st March. The majority of the grant was spent on food vouchers that were distributed through schools during the school holidays targeted at children eligible for Pupil Premium and Children in Need (including children subject to a child protection plan), with the remaining amount used by Housing through the Welfare fund for food, utilities and other essentials to support families.

7. Covid Winter Grant Scheme Extension – 2021/22 - £262k

This grant was an extension of the COVID Winter grant to the 16th April 2021. The same criteria were applied as above with the same outcomes and expenditure.

The total grant allocation for numbers 6 and 7 was £1,016k. Overall the CEF portfolio spent £689k on this grant. The Housing portfolio spent £286k. £41k was not claimed.

8. Emergency Assistance Grant - £279k – 2020/21

The Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies was for local authorities in England to use to support people who were struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID-19. The expectation was that spend against the grant should be within 12 weeks of the receipt of the grant. This meant valid expenditure to the end of October 2020.

The expenditure was split into two parts. £115k was allocated to food banks for food distribution. The remaining £164k was allocated to CSC and funded activities for care leavers, youth activities, short breaks and activities for looked after children.

9. Wellbeing for Education – 2020/21 - £39k

On 4th August 2020 the DfE announced funding and resources to train and support education settings to respond to the wellbeing and mental health needs of pupils and students. The allocation for Bromley was £39k and although unringfenced, the expectation was that the grant be utilised in 2020/21 financial year under the following conditions:

- a) Adapt the DfE's Wellbeing for Education Return training package, to include local context and information about local services
- b) Provide ongoing support to all state-funded settings in their area, on promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing

The grant was used to enhance and complement the existing initiatives for mental health and wellbeing for children within Bromley, working with other organisations including Bromley Y and CAMHS. This included self-harm workshops for schools and other settings and multi-media resources included within the Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit.

10. Household Support Fund - £1,868k

In October 2021 the Government announced the ringfenced Household Support Fund to support those most in need this winter. At least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children. The expectation is that the funding should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

The Council's allocation is £1,868k and officers are currently finalising the plans for the utilisation of this funding. The likelihood is that there will be a similar arrangement to that of the COVID Local Support Grant with a combination of CEF and Housing portfolios controlling the expenditure