

25 May 2021  
Our ref: 7297729

Thank you for your request received on 27 April 2021, for the following information:

**Introduction**

- 1. The £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme will be made available in early December 2020 to March 31 2021 to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials.**
- 2. That scheme has now been extended to 16 April 2021 and funding has been increased by a further £59.1 million.**
- 3. Guidance has been updated to reflect new funding amounts and amended reporting dates. General guidance, including spend frameworks, eligibility and MI completion have remained the same.**
- 4. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide funding to county councils and unitary authorities (including metropolitan councils and London boroughs), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide assistance to vulnerable families with children and other vulnerable households, particularly affected by the pandemic. County councils and unitary authorities in England have a statutory duty for childcare and have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including issuing grants to third parties, providing vouchers to households or making direct provision of food, for example. County councils are encouraged to work together with district councils to provide support and ensure the funding meets its objectives. Note: County councils and unitary authorities will be referred to as 'authorities' throughout the remainder of this guidance.**

**Details of the FOI:**

- 1. How did you distribute the COVID Winter Grant to vulnerable families, i.e. cash, food parcels or retail supermarket vouchers?**
- 2. Did you use this grant to distribute financial support to families of children eligible for Free School Meals?**
- 3. How many children were eligible for Free School Meals and how many children claimed financial support via the grant scheme?**
- 4. Did you use the grant to distribute support to other vulnerable families / individuals and if so, which groups, i.e. homeless etc.?**
- 5. If using supermarket vouchers**
  - (a) which supplier(s) did you use to distribute the vouchers?**
  - (b) how did you choose a supplier?**

- (c) what were your top 3 mandatory requirements for the service?  
(d) did you coordinate the ordering to all beneficiaries/recipients, or was access delegated to schools to administer and order?  
(e) did you enter into a direct contract with the supplier or call off via a framework?  
(f) when does your contract end?
6. Following Government's extension of the COVID Winter Grant, will you continue to fund Free School Meal vouchers in May half-term and summer holidays?
7. Which role(s) and job functions manage the contract for this service?

We have processed this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **Response**

The council holds the information requested and the answers to your questions are below

### ***Details of the FOI:***

#### ***1. How did you distribute the COVID Winter Grant to vulnerable families, i.e. cash, food parcels or retail supermarket vouchers?***

Families with children received supermarket vouchers. Adults Services administered the element of the grant for adults without children working with partner organisations

#### ***2. Did you use this grant to distribute financial support to families of children eligible for Free School Meals?***

The criteria for eligibility was for families with children and adults without children who had been financially impacted by Covid 19, this included families with children accessing free school meals

#### ***3. How many children were eligible for Free School Meals and how many children claimed financial support via the grant scheme?***

There are c. 9,000 children eligible for free school meals and approximately 6, 000 of these are taken up by parents.

The following number of children were included in payments

9,965 December/January

9,938 February

13,866 March

#### ***4. Did you use the grant to distribute support to other vulnerable families / individuals and if so, which groups, i.e. homeless etc.?***

The criteria was agreed for families with children and adults without children who had been financially impacted by Covid 19, decisions were made on personal circumstances rather than categorisation of specific groups.

**5. If using supermarket vouchers**

**(a) which supplier(s) did you use to distribute the vouchers?**

WONDE

**(b) how did you choose a supplier?**

This system through WONDE was already available to the vast majority of Barnet schools and as such was the most efficient way for the vouchers to be distributed

**(c) what were your top 3 mandatory requirements for the service?**

As above – this was utilising a system already in place

**(d) did you coordinate the ordering to all beneficiaries/recipients, or was access delegated to schools to administer and order?**

We worked with schools to identify their cohort of children and agreed budgets, schools then raised their own orders. For Early Years providers orders were raised centrally

**(e) did you enter into a direct contract with the supplier or call off via a framework?**

London Borough of Barnet did not enter into a direct contract. Most schools already had contracts with the supplier to provide services related to information management. London Borough of Barnet made some purchases for the administration of Early Years settings vouchers, after consulting with procurement colleagues. The value of purchases was below the threshold required for a full procurement exercise.

**(f) when does your contract end?**

N/A, LBB does not have a contract with the supplier.

**6. Following Government's extension of the COVID Winter Grant, will you continue to fund Free School Meal vouchers in May half-term and summer holidays?**

The Covid Support Fund has been extended until the 20<sup>th</sup> June and we will support eligible children and families over the half term period, the DWP has not indicated any funding after this point however the DfE funded Holiday Activity and Food programme commenced at Easter and will run for four weeks over the summer holidays

## **7. Which role(s) and job functions manage the contract for this service?**

Head of 0-19 Early Help Services

### **Further information**

If you are interested in the data that the council holds you may wish to visit Open Barnet, the council's data portal. This brings together all our published datasets and other information of interest on one searchable database for anyone, anywhere to access. <http://open.barnet.gov.uk/>

### **Advice and Assistance : Direct Marketing**

If you are a company that intends to use the names and contact details of council officers (or other officers) provided in this response for direct marketing, you need to be registered with the Information Commissioner to process personal data for this purpose. You must also check that the individual (whom you wish to contact for direct marketing purposes) is not registered with one of the Preference Services to prevent Direct Marketing. If they are you must adhere to this preference.

You must also ensure you comply with the Privacy Electronic and Communications Regulations (PECR). For more information follow this Link [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

**For the avoidance of doubt the provision of council (and other) officer names and contact details under FOI does not give consent to receive direct marketing via any media and expressly does not constitute a 'soft opt-in' under PECR.**

### **Your rights**

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review within the next 40 working days by writing to the Information Management Team at: [foi@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:foi@barnet.gov.uk). Or by post to Information Management Team (FOI) London Borough of Barnet, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

If, having exhausted our review procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you will have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF (telephone: 0303 123 1113; website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)). There is no charge for making an appeal.