

<b>COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 9</b>
<b>8 MARCH 2022</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Director Place and Economy	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Steve Allen, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities	
Contact Officer(s):	Matt Oliver, Head of Think Communities	07919213962

## **SOCIAL MOBILITY (PETERBOROUGH HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND AND COMMUNITY HUB DELIVERY)**

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM:</b> Matt Oliver (Head of Think Communities)	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Committee: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note and comment on the delivery, outputs and approach of the Peterborough Household Support Fund and Community Hub Delivery.</li> <li>2. Note and comment on the plans to de-escalate isolation support payments in line with national and local removal of covid restrictions.</li> </ol>	

### **1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Request from the Service Director and Cabinet Member for an update on the delivery of the Household Support Fund and Community Hub.

### **2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

- 2.1 To note and comment on the progress of the fund and provide feedback on development of any future support funds which may be implemented.

- 2.2 This report is for the Communities committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No Terms of Reference No. 2.1, Functions determined by the Council:

2. Neighbourhood and Community Support (including cohesion and community safety)

- 2.3 This report and its work contribute to Corporate Priority outcome 2

First rate futures for our children & young people, quality support for our adults and elderly:- ensuring the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

### **3. TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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## **4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In July a report was presented to this committee which set out the some of the work which was being undertaken, using a Think Communities approach to work together to protect some of our most vulnerable residents against Covid19.

Through the period of the pandemic and beyond this council is determined that it takes every opportunity to support those most vulnerable and seldom heard residents to meet the economic challenges that they are likely to face.

Focusing on the Social Mobility of our citizens will ensure that we take a holistic and systems approach to ensuring that upcoming generations are able to take the opportunities available to live better quality lives than those which have gone before.

To that end, the Safer Peterborough Partnership Delivery Group (the cross-system group which collaborated through the Covid19 pandemic) has adopted a number of focus areas designed tackle social immobility, including:

- Employability
- Mental Health
- Food and Fuel Poverty
- Young People
- Housing and Homelessness

And key groups such as the mental health exemplar, Tackling Worklessness in Peterborough, Peterborough Food Strategy, Affordable Warmth Strategy, Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services, Early Help, Youth Support and Peterborough Foodbank are all collaborating to support our residents.

The work of the Peterborough Hub is intrinsically linked with this network in order to ensure that key pieces of work reach out to support those vulnerable residents and one of the most significant support schemes has been the delivery of the household support fund.

### **4.2 Household Support Fund – Background**

4.2.1 The Government announced the Household Support Fund to run from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The Fund is designed to support those most in need over the winter months. The Peterborough Household Support Fund follows on from two similar schemes – the Covid Winter Grant Scheme which ran over the winter months in 2020/21, and the Covid Local Support Grant Scheme which ran until 30 September 2021. Although there are many similarities between the three schemes, the latest fund provided greater flexibility to support more households without children and broadened out the scope of the type of support that could be offered. 50% of the fund to was ringfenced to households with children and 50% to other households – which may include households not in current receipt of DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) benefits and can include those who have NRPF (No Resource to Public Funds).

4.2.2 The funding allocation for Peterborough was £1,824,656, with the planned delivery being £824k being offered through Direct Vouchers to eligible families over October – Christmas – Feb holidays as has been done in the past as well as just over £1 million remaining for other support. The wider scheme was offered as Food, Fuel, Water vouchers or payment in certain circumstances. Support toward Heating Oil/Gas Cylinders, Furniture, White Goods by direct supply. Clothing, Blankets, Towels via Highstreet vouchers and Urgent Repair Costs.

#### 4.2.3 Eligibility criteria for the fund was as follows:

For awards below £50 evidence of low or no income (via written evidence or a discussion with our team or a Trusted Partner) was required. Low income being defined as total household income below the HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs) low-income threshold (currently £17,940).

For awards with a financial value equivalent to £50 and above, applicants must have been in receipt of one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit
- Working Tax Credit

4.2.4 If all or part of the household was working, the total household income must have been below the HMRC low-income threshold (currently £17,940). In exceptional circumstances (for example, for people without payslips or who haven't yet applied for benefits) we exercised appropriate discretion to ensure we were able to help those most in need.

4.2.5 Households were able to apply for support as many times as necessary, but that from the third application we aimed to make direct contact with the household to have a broader discussion about need in order to seek to address the underlying causes of that need.

4.2.6 The Peterborough Hub co-ordinated the scheme in conjunction with the Countywide Covid Coordination Hub. Continuing act as the bridge between community support and other public sector services.

4.2.7 There was a requirement for PCC (Peterborough City Council) to provide management information to the DWP, and the already existing frameworks that were in place for direct payments were used to ensure speed of implementation.

4.2.8 To ensure that we reached out to as many families in need of support as possible, up to 1% of the value of the Fund excluding the Direct Voucher Scheme was set aside for communications work, as well as working with our community champions, community voluntary and public sector partners to make sure the fund reached out into our communities as well as targeting specific vulnerable or more isolated groups.

4.2.9 Co-designed principles being:

- That the scheme is simple to understand and to access, given that it is designed to support households in urgent need
- That it is delivered with as little bureaucracy as possible, to ensure as much of the funding as possible reaches vulnerable households
- That we establish as many application routes as possible, and publicise it widely, so that anybody in need can seek support
- That we work creatively to identify potentially vulnerable households that might not yet be known to services, and find ways of reaching out to them to offer support
- That we continue to work in absolute collaboration with our partners across the public and voluntary sectors to reach as many households as possible, but to also make sure that ongoing support, where required, is available for households beyond that which can be provided by this Fund.

#### 4.3 **Present Status of the Fund**

At the inception of this model of work, as mentioned above, there was an aspiration that the maximum amount of funding was drawn down from government for the benefit of the citizens of Peterborough.

The programme was due to run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, however due to unprecedented demand was projected to reach the limit of funding available by 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022 and was closed to applications on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Feb 2022 to be able to process remaining applications in the system as well as give our trusted delivery partners 48hrs to submit any applications for their vulnerable clients.

#### 4.4 Delivery Outputs and Outcomes

4.4.1 At the time of authoring this report (17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022) 12277 applications had been received which totalled a spend of £980,745.72.

Breakdown of processed applications by type as shown below in table 1

Payment Method	Number of Applications
Pay point Cash out	9254
Blackhawk Food	8676
Pay Point Energy SMS	2113
The Furnishing Service England	243
BACS Payment	14
Argos Payment Card	3

7822 individual people benefited from the fund with 2405 of those applying more than once.

The average number of applications per day was 146 with the highest number of applications on any one day being 370.

4.4.2 Application by benefit is shown in table 2

Benefits	Number of Applications
Universal Credit	8451
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance	1101
Working Tax Credit	847
Income Support	636
None of the above	397
Pension Credit	304
Income-based Job Seekers Allowance	88

As part of the due diligence of the scheme use of the DPW benefit checking system was used alongside a number of key questions and from these 91% of applicants told us that they were having trouble feeding their family and 87% told us that they were having difficulty paying household bills. 71% of applicants said that they needed other support.

4.4.3 As described in the introduction the team worked closely with the SPP (Safer Peterborough Partnership) delivery group and our trusted partner network to reach out to key cohorts of vulnerable people numbers of applications are set out below.

4.4.4

Name Of Group	Number of Applications
Cross Keys Homes	67
Diamond Hampers	67
Peterborough Council hub	19
Barnardo's	8
Kingsgate Church	6
CAB	5
Covid-19 Co-ordination Hub	5
Age UK	4
Citizens Advice	2
Counting Every Adult and Housing First	2

4.4.5 Although the numbers of applications were lower through our trusted groups there were real benefits for those more vulnerable people who needed support to apply as well as to redeem vouchers that were sent electronically. We found that this was a very good way of mitigating a number of inequalities which arose from the set up of the scheme as trusted group were able to offer support to their clients. Trusted partner training was given at the point of onboarding those organisations and a single point of contact link was created to ensure that issues with applications could be worked through in a timely manner and support good accessibility.

#### 4.5 **LEARNING AND NEXT STEPS**

Delivering the Household Support Fund through the model set out in this report has enabled the council to reach out and support thousands of residents at a time when families are facing significant cost of living rises.

The information collected has enabled the Peterborough Hub to signpost residents to wider food and fuel support and income maximisation through our partnerships with CAB the Affordable Warmth Strategy team and Community Voluntary Sector through the Safer Peterborough Partnership Delivery Group. Working with our trusted partner network enabled us to reach out to more vulnerable residents at a grass roots level and we should continue to foster and build on these relationships through the Safer Peterborough Partnership Delivery Group and our developing Community Champions network.

We will further interrogate the data that we have collected to understand more about the residents who have accessed the fund as well as send out a follow up survey to help us to better understand issues of access and inequality for future schemes and to work with the Safer Peterborough Partnership Delivery Group to find joint solutions to the issues which our residents face.

#### **WIDER PETERBOROUGH HUB WORK**

4.6

4.6.1 As well as the household support fund the Peterborough hub has continued to support residents to mitigate the financial impacts of Covid19. Supporting those in isolation to access essentials as well as isolation payments where they have lost income as a result. Helping people to get to vaccination appointments. And signposting to income maximisation support for those suffering financially as a result of living through the pandemic. The team have made a point of treating each contact as an individual holistically assessing their needs and accessing the most appropriate support to the resident appropriate for their own situation.

4.6.2

Delivery between the 3 months from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> January:

- No of contacts: 1,149
- Referrals from call centre: 875
- Referrals from County Hub: 117
- Direct emails from residents for support: 15
- Food related support: 459
- Self-Isolation specific support: 332

4.6.3

As the country continues to move forward from the pandemic to “live with covid” the Peterborough hub will appropriately scale back its support for isolation in line with the removal of the requirement to test and isolate.

4.6.4

The Peterborough Hub will look to continue to support residents in need by connecting them to community support and at the time of writing this report are in discussions with the main Peterborough contact centre to investigate how this work can be mainstreamed.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

5.1 Consultation was undertaken with partners before the setup of the scheme, however this was limited due to the available time to set up the scheme. Further consultation will be ongoing with

partners for any future schemes which we are asked to deliver.

## **6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

- 6.1 From the work on the Household Support Fund which has been undertaken we will have valuable person level data we will be able to appropriately use to reach out and further support our residents. We have gained valuable feedback and operational understanding of the support which people are in need of in order to be able to feedback to our partners and communities about the difficulties that they are facing. As a result of the scheme 7822 people were supported and there has been much supportive feedback from our beneficiaries. As part of the scheme users were also signposted to other support which may be able to help them, many were forwarded to opportunities such as income maximisation or to look at more affordable fuel tariffs through LEAP.

## **7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 Ongoing reports to scrutiny about the work of Think Communities, Social Mobility will ensure that members are informed about the work which is ongoing as well as to be able to actively make recommendations and give feedback to shape the interventions being developed.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 None

## **9. IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 9.1 No internal financial implications for the delivery of the household support fund as this was external funding.

### **Legal Implications**

- 9.2 None

### **Rural Implications**

- 9.4 None

### **Carbon Impact Assessment**

- 9.5 Generally, the scheme was run in the most carbon neutral way possible for the impact which we were trying to achieve – further work should be done in the future to procure more efficient white goods if a scheme were to be delivered in the same way.

The report contains no proposals for changes to service delivery and therefore there is no decision to take which may impact carbon emissions of the council.

## **10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 10.1 None

## **11. APPENDICES**

- 11.1 None