



THE EDINBURGH PARTNERSHIP

COVID-19 Immediate Support: Alleviating Financial Hardship

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government's initial funding for Covid19 support activities ended in September 2020. On 20 October 2020 the Scottish Government announced that a £30 million package of funding was being made available to local authorities to support people facing financial hardship because of coronavirus. Edinburgh's allocation has been confirmed as £1.36m.
- 1.2 This funding will be primarily used to provide direct financial support through various schemes such as the Scottish Welfare Scheme and other financial support initiatives. It will also be used to reinstate the Council/EVOC coordinated emergency food support pathway that operated efficiently during the first months of the pandemic.
- 1.3 In addition to these immediate support activities and consistent with feedback from the third sector, work is also being planned to engage with partner organisations on future service provision, including tackling food insecurity. This work will align with the Council's response to the Edinburgh Poverty Commission's recent publication.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that The Edinburgh Partnership note:
 - the update in this report in relation to the ongoing immediate support activities to address financial hardship associated with COVID-19 and;
 - the Council's intention to engage with the 3rd sector on a longer-term strategy to tackle financial hardship in Edinburgh.

3. Main Report

Financial Hardship – Immediate Support and Future Actions

- 3.1 The Scottish Government's initial funding for Covid19 support activities ended in September 2020. On 20 October 2020 the Scottish Government confirmed that a £30 million package of funding was being made available to local authorities to support people facing financial hardship.
- 3.2 Edinburgh's funding was recently confirmed as £1.362m, payable over the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. This funding is designed to provide support for those in financial crisis or that require immediate food and essentials, relating to Covid and Brexit.
- 3.3 The Scottish Government has emphasised the principles of choice and a cash-first approach, and this is endorsed by Council officers. This approach protects

the dignity of those receiving support and allows for appropriate levels of personal choice and flexibility.

- 3.4 Like earlier initiatives requests for support will be coordinated through the Council's Contact Centre where information will be gathered to establish whether direct financial support is available e.g. Isolation Grant, Crisis Grant etc.
- 3.5 The Crisis Grant is currently receiving a significant increase in applications and this additional funding will enable awards to be made to those most in need and mitigate the drivers of financial hardship e.g. food, fuel poverty etc. Experience and insight from key Council services, aligned with the work of the Poverty Commission, highlights that specific groups are potentially falling outside of, or are unable to access, normal benefits/financial support e.g. those with no recourse to public funding. This budget will be used to support the emergency/crisis needs of this group.
- 3.6 Where direct financial support is not available there is the potential for food deliveries. The Council worked successfully with EVOC throughout the first months of the pandemic to deliver food packages across the city. An initial budget of £300k has been ringfenced to allow the Council and EVOC to reinstate the vulnerable food pathway for Council referrals.
- 3.7 This approach will utilise a third sector hub model, supported by local partners. Food deliveries will be made for several weeks, and citizens will be asked to make contact again if further support is required. This activity is also expected to include emergency food provision for clients presenting through the Council's Emergency Social Care Service.
- 3.8 This approach will be communicated to partner agencies to highlight the established support pathway for people experiencing immediate hardship. This will ensure that appropriate support is targeted, whilst avoiding crossover or duplication of effort and support.
- 3.9 The immediate response work has also shown there is a wide range of Council services which interact, commission or have contracts with the third sector in relation to meeting citizen needs. Feedback from the third sector has highlighted a wish for further engagement with the Council around opportunities to become more sustainably involved in a range of future service provision, including tackling food insecurity. As a result, a concurrent piece of work will be undertaken by the Council's Strategy Team, in conjunction with the third sector, to develop a longer term support and intervention strategy. This will form part of the Council's coordinated response to the recent Poverty Commission report

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