

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 17th March 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Adult Social Care

SUBJECT: Homelessness Funding Grant Allocation

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This Report describes the various grants that have been issued by Central Government to support rough sleepers and people who are, or are likely to become, homeless. It makes proposals for the allocation of these grants.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) Executive Board note and consider the contents of this Report and
- ii) Approve the recommendations for expenditure against the grants, as described in Appendices 1 and 2

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Context:

3.1.1 The Government confirmed the allocation of a key element of the overall investment: of £315.8 million in funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is available to local authorities in 2022/23 to support and deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness

3.1.2 Halton has been allocated homelessness grant funding of £344,829 for 2022/23, with an additional £11,338 for domestic abuse burdens. The Government has streamlined the funding allocation streams to simplify the process; with the Homelessness Prevention Grant replacing the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Grant.

3.1.3 The funding grant allocation will be ring-fenced to ensure the Local Authority has the resources to take action to prevent homelessness, and utilise the funding to continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act.

3.2 Purpose of Grant Funding

3.2.1 The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those

who are at risk of homelessness, and to deliver the following priorities:

- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness
- Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention,
- Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit

3.2.2 This funding will be provided upfront in April 2022 and can be used flexibly as part of the councils' resourcing to contribute to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act, domestic abuse burdens and supporting with the costs of temporary accommodation.

3.3 Proposed Funding Allocation

3.3.1 The Homelessness Prevention Grant will be allocated to improve and deliver statutory services and develop new initiatives to prevent homelessness. The proposed Prevention grant funding allocation is outlined within Appendix 1.

3.3.2 Within the grant allocation funding, there is an additional amount of £50,000. It is proposed that the funding will provide financial incentives to prevent homelessness and offer vulnerable clients financial assistance and support to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies.

3.3.3 These services have proven successful during the latter years and assisted clients to remain within their homes or have the necessary assistance to move into alternative suitable housing accommodation.

3.3.4 One of the biggest barrier for clients accessing private rented accommodation is the need for guarantors. The proposal is for the LA to act as guarantor for 3 - 6 months to enable vulnerable client groups to access properties in the private sector, this is intended to break down barriers and encourage landlords to work directly with the LA. The scheme will also link in with the Bond Guarantee Scheme to offer longer term support and reassurance to landlords.

3.3.5 The proposal for an additional triage officer is intended to support the team to complete initial assessment to ascertain what interim action is required. The officer will manage the temporary accommodation placements and address all identified issues relating to homelessness clients placed within the accommodation. The officer will work with homelessness clients and support them to address health and housing issues. The post will reduce the pressure upon the team, thus allowing officers to focus upon homelessness prevention measures.

3.3.6 The domestic abuse funding will enable the Local Authority to meet its statutory requirements in line with legislation. The burdens funding will be used to assist victim of domestic abuse retain tenancy security and offer additional training to officers.

3.4 Rough Sleepers Initiative Funding

- 3.4.1 The Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding (RSI 4) will continue to run in 2021/22, commencing its fifth year of funding in April 2022. The funding bid is presently being drawn up to retain existing services and will also be ring-fenced in 2022/23, to ensure the funds are dedicated to achieve the shared ambition of ending rough sleeping.
- 3.4.2 This funding is described as being made available for local authorities to support people living on the streets. The Local Authority was awarded £106,000 for 2021/22 and the Government has released the RSI 5 funding bid which will cover a three year period and must be submitted by 27/2/22. The proposed bid to continue with existing services is detailed within Appendix 2.
- 3.4.3 The identified services are a continuation of the service presently being delivered, which has proven successful and has been highlighted as best practice. The outreach support services will work with all rough sleepers to assist them off the streets and access to short and long term sustainable accommodation.

3.5 Winter Funding Enhancement 2021/22

- 3.5.1 The Government announced a £65 million top up of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2021/22. The one off ring-fenced grant allocation for Halton is £72,303 and available to support private renters with rent arrears, avoid eviction and find new accommodation where necessary, thus allowing Local Authorities to target those most in need.
- 3.5.2 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) expect the additional funding to be specifically used to maximise upstream homelessness prevention for low-income clients within private rented accommodation, however, it cannot be used to fund temporary accommodation. The funding allocation for 2021/22 must be spent by 31st March 2022.
- 3.5.3 Funding will be used to deliver early intervention measures to offer a more client focused service to both clients within the private rented sector and homeowners. The LA must demonstrate negotiations with landlords and financial agencies to increase tenancy and home ownership sustainment.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this Report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications are as described in this Report. The increased demand in homelessness presentations has placed additional pressure upon the team. The funding grant will provide additional staffing to deliver homelessness services and reduce/prevent homelessness and will complement the ongoing delivery of services for homelessness clients, with additional financial assistance to promote

lifestyle change and sustainability.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The services and supports provided by the Housing Solutions Team apply to young people, families and care leavers, as well as to individuals who find themselves homeless. These can be some of the most vulnerable groups in our communities, and many rely on accessing suitable social housing to meet their needs.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Key elements of the services for rough sleepers include the provision of an outreach nurse practitioner, and an outreach team to help entrenched rough sleepers to engage with services, move off the streets and address housing and health needs. The nurse practitioner can prescribe and can provide direct health advice and support, thereby reducing pressures on hard-pressed GP and secondary care services.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Although the number of rough sleepers in Halton is small, they can be perceived as being a public nuisance, particularly when associated with begging. The services and supports funded by the grant allocations help to reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough and to manage their situations more effectively.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 On an individual basis, the provision of help and support from the housing and homelessness service is addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our area.

7.2 The provision of services to support rough sleepers and potentially homeless people is a statutory requirement. Without the services and support described in this Report and funded by grant allocation, the council would be at risk of legal challenge.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality implications arising from the contents of this Report.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

The report outlines the purpose of the awarded grant allocation to provide full breakdown of expenditure and transparency.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The funding allocation 2022/23 will commence on 1st April 2022.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.

Appendix 1

Proposals for allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant

Funding	Service Delivery	Purpose
£64.000	2 x Housing Solutions Advisers	Increased levels of homelessness put additional pressure upon Housing Solutions Team. Additional officers to meet demand and ensure LA is fully compliant with statutory requirement
£40.000	CGL Homelessness Nurse Practitioner	Continuation of provision to deliver outreach health advice and prescribing to homelessness clients.
£55.000	Prevention Fund	Offer financial funding to prevent homelessness. E.g., rent arrears, safety certificates, deposits etc. Assist migrant Families (including those experiencing domestic abuse) who have NRPF, whilst applying for immigration status.
£18.000	No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – Families	Homelessness data reporting IT system (Jigsaw) Accommodation and support referral IT system across LCR Mainstay
£25.000	Mainstay & Jigsaw	
£50.000	Bond Guarantee Service	Financial uplift for private landlords to encourage engagement and assist with accommodation provision
£30.000	Mortgage Rescue	Financial assistance to homeowners to prevent homelessness
£30.000	GIFT Initiative	Furniture package for homelessness clients to assist when undertaking new tenancy.
£32,000	Support Officer Columba	Officer based at Columba to provide additional support for clients placed there during COVID.
£828.00	Staff Training	Additional training for staff to ensure they are compliant with Homelessness legal requirements

Appendix 2

Proposals for the allocation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant

Funding	Delivery	Purpose
£17.000	Changing Lives Sit up service	Provide 3 crisis spaces for rough sleepers for upto 3 nights.
£64.000	Whitechapel 1 x Intensive Support Officer 1 x Move On Officer	Outreach support provision for rough sleepers.to source accommodation within the private rented sector
£20.000	Prevention Fund	Financial assistance for rough sleepers. E.g. enhanced deposits, rent in advance etc.
£10.000	No Recourse to Public Funds	Assist migrants who have NRPF, whilst applying for immigration status.
£17.000	Outreach support	Provide intensive support to rough sleepers placed at Lacy St/Market Street accommodation.
£20.000	Co-ordinator (joint service covering Halton & Knowsley	Coordinator role to work alongside team. Strategic approach, identify trends, demands, gaps in services.