

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

**Question to Mark Sutton
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

By Susan Woodward

Question

In June, Government announced a fund to support those in need of food and basic essentials during the Covid19 crisis. In response, the County Council set up its “Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies” in August with a grant from Government of approx. £800,000. Of this, £600,000 was allocated to Family Hubs for distribution to families in need via Edenred food vouchers, each voucher being worth £15. Can the Cabinet Member tell me please how many vouchers have currently been allocated to Staffordshire families in each of our Districts?

Reply

Defra announced the Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Emergency Supplies. This grant was made available from 05 August 2020 to support all residents of Staffordshire who may require support. This includes families, individuals and those asked to self-isolate due to COVID-19 with limited alternatives to access food and emergency supplies.

The grant made it clear that the Local Authorities (LA) had discretion on how we identify those most in need. As a result, we have used a broad definition to include those entitled to benefits or those who people identified in immediate need of help and those who are struggling to afford food and essentials due to COVID-19.

The grant suggested that LA’s should consider using cash or vouchers where practical as this may reduce pressure on local partners. It also allows people the flexibility to get the food items that they most need.

In addition, the grant seeks to ensure that we provide information to people to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits and community support.

The government did anticipate that most of the funding will be spent within 12 weeks. However, in Staffordshire we were keen to ensure that funds were available to allow for flexibility to use as slightly longer-term support.

The amount allocated for the Family Hubs was £600,000 for food and emergency supplies. In total 1287 Vouchers in total have been issued (as of 05.10.20), more detail is provided below:

District	Total Vouchers Issued
Cannock	122
East Staffordshire	134
Lichfield	205
Newcastle	210
South Staffordshire	75
Stafford	207
Staffordshire Moorlands	208
Tamworth	126
Total	1287

There has been an increase in the number of referrals in the last 2 weeks which has seen the distribution of these vouchers double within this time and we continue to seek members' support to promote this scheme to local residents who may need assistance.

The information on how to access this support is available here <https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/service.page?id=X8GSyOF0ADQ>