



**Information Governance
Team**

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20 May 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)
Request ID: FOI328432724**

Thank you for your request for information relating to COVID Winter Grant .

You have requested the following information:

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

Covid Winter Grant support was provided through various routes shown below:

Supply of food parcels
Food vouchers
Paypoint vouchers
Supply of essential household items i.e. white goods
Supply of sanitary products.

2. Did you use this grant to distribute financial support to families of children eligible for free school meals?

Yes.

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

At Easter there were 13,203 children eligible for Free School Meals – vouchers were issued to all of these children. The numbers issued at Christmas and February half-term were broadly similar to this.

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

Any citizens that could demonstrate that they were in, or at risk of, food or fuel poverty were able to access support from the Covid Winter Grant.

5. If using supermarket vouchers

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

Supermarket vouchers were supplied by Tesco initially and then through Wonde.

(b) how did you choose a supplier?

We have an established Community Support Grant Team that existed pre-COVID who issued Tesco vouchers as part of their awards. We continued this arrangement in part due to the speed at which a process was required to deliver food vouchers for the Christmas Holiday period but also because Tesco vouchers cannot be used to purchase Cigarettes and Alcohol.

Analysis that we had undertaken for the Christmas voucher issue identified that a lot of schools who were using food voucher schemes already were using Wonde. We spoke to Wonde and established that they did not take a cut from the Local Authority (i.e. If we purchased £15 vouchers, parent received £15 vouchers) and that all vouchers could be delivered electronically. Due to the very short timescales involved in organising the voucher process, and due to the fact that many schools were already familiar and using Wonde it was felt that they met our key criteria. Schools who already had their own voucher/parcel process could continue to use this.

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

- Parental choice of where to use the voucher (food items only);
- Process doesn't require child / parents to go into school to pick up vouchers. This was a key requirement as we were in a national lockdown and not all children were on site;
- Short timescale and ease of implementation (due to severe time pressures around delivery) and expectation that there would be no further issue of vouchers as the grant was due to end on 31st March.

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

The approach was mixed, with the Local Authority co-ordinating for citizens and for some schools, and others co-ordinating themselves.

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

For Tesco vouchers we used existing contract arrangements already in place through our Community Support Grant Team.

For WONDE we entered into a direct contract.

(f) when does your contract end?

The Tesco contract continues as part of the Community Support Grant process.

Wonde contract ends on completion of the financial transaction.

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 government has extended the grant (now called the Covid Local Support Grant) until June 20th - we will be providing free school meal vouchers for the May half-term as this falls within the grant period.

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

Head of Education Improvement and Standards & Finance Manager

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Yours faithfully

Information Governance