

Local Authority Test and Trace Service Support Grant – proposed areas of expenditure

1. Context

Councils were informed by letter on 11th of June of allocation for the Local Authority Test and Trace Service Support Grant (see Appendix One)

The purpose of the grant is ‘to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19’.

Further detail on how the grant should be used referred to a communication from the Minister of State for Patient Safety on 23/5/20 outlining the importance of expanding local testing capacity, understanding the local spread of the virus, community engagement to follow government guidance and support for those self-isolation.

Tower Hamlets was allocated £3.2m. There has been no timeline set out for expenditure and it is assumed this is a one-off allocation.

2. Principles for use of Grant

The Grant is being used to strengthen existing capacity being used to respond to Covid-19 and develop new programmes.

It is focussed particularly on addressing the disparities that emerged through the first wave and were highlighted in the PHE disparities report including impacts linked to occupation, ethnicity and deprivation.

The planning assumption for use of the grant is that over the two years from when the grant was issued it is likely that there will be intermittent waves of Covid-19 requiring ongoing intensification and relaxation of measures to limit transmission of the virus.

As has often proven to be the case since the start of the epidemic, it is also likely that there will be unanticipated situations which will require use of the grant fund.

Based on these considerations it is prudent to take a two-year horizon for this grant and allow for contingency.

3. Current use of the Grant

The delivery plan for the Local Outbreak Plan (Safe Tower Hamlets) is framed around workstreams covering Safe Place, Safe Communities, Safe Individuals with cross cutting themes of integrated intelligence and communications.

Safe Place (£400k)

The purpose of the Safe Place workstream is to ensure that public, communal and private spaces are places where risk of transmission of the virus is minimised and outbreaks are identified and contained as early as possible.

This requires intensive work across the borough in a range of settings where risk of transmission is high such as schools, care homes, faith settings, businesses, universities, markets, housing estates and high footfall public spaces.

In addition, in order to prevent and contain outbreaks work is needed to ensure that there is rapid access to testing, test results and mobilisation of response.

This work involves ongoing surveillance, on the ground engagement with high risk settings, establishment of test sites and testing arrangements, preparation for outbreaks and response to outbreaks.

Much of this work is undertaken by the council's environmental health, public health and intelligence teams.

The Grant is currently being used to provide added capacity to:

- **engage with small businesses and markets that may struggle to maintain COVID-19 secure conditions for staff and customers and ensure compliance with 'hands, space, face' in public spaces (£200k)**
- **engage with faith settings and particularly small faith settings where COVID-19 security may be an issue (£60k)**
- **develop and provide physical infrastructure promoting social distancing and signage in the public realm (£50k)**
- **test local outbreak control plans in high risk settings and coordinate incident management teams where outbreaks occur in the borough (£60k)**
- **coordinate the local testing offer to residents (local testing sites, mobile testing units) (£30k)**

Safe Communities (£424k)

The purpose of the Safe Communities workstream is to ensure that the impacts of COVID-19 on communities are heard and that they are fully involved in how COVID-19 messages are developed, understood and acted on.

The lesson of the first wave nationally was that COVID-19 hit some communities and groups harder, that messages were not getting through and, even if they were, there were barriers to acting on them.

This workstream requires listening to the issues that residents are facing in their communities, strengthening channels for ongoing dialogue and coproducing approaches to dealing with the range of impacts of COVID-19 on people's lives.

The work builds on assets, relationships and networks that existed pre COVID and that also have been developed through the epidemic.

The Grant is being used to:

- **develop a resident led Community COVID-19 Champions programme (£30k initially)**
- **implement a small grants programme for resident led innovation to respond to COVID-19 (£34k)**

- **commission outreach work with groups where additional engagement is required (including Somali, Bangladeshi, young people and people with disability) (£190k)**
- **develop the resilience of the voluntary sector in responding to COVID-19 (£60k)**
- **provide ongoing community insight through participatory research into penetration of COVID-19 messages in high risk groups and how these are being acted on (£50k)**
- **provide programme management capacity to coordinate the intensive work to deliver on this workstream (£60k)**

Safe Individuals (£401k)

The purpose of the Safe Individuals workstream is to ensure that individuals are aware of and act on COVID-19 measures to protect themselves and others and are supported to self-isolate as required by national guidance.

In the context of continually changing advice, there is an ongoing and pressing need to strengthen and clarify national communications. It is also important to ensure this communication is tailored to different segments of the population and reaches those most vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.

An important element of this communication is to ensure individuals with symptoms are tested and then respond to the national 'test and trace' programme to enable contact tracing.

The national 'Test and trace' programme is an important measure to contain transmission of the virus. However, it relies on being able to contact and communicate with people who have tested positive and their contacts.

This does not always happen (the national programme contacts around 80% of positives and 60% of contacts). There are a range of reasons for this and it has been necessary to use the fund to develop a local test and trace programme that integrates with the national programme.

Self-isolation is essential to contain spread but is potentially a huge disruption to people's lives with significant economic impacts. In addition, for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, there is an ongoing need to take extra precautions to protect themselves from infection and there remains a possibility that 'shielding' will be reinstated as levels of community transmission rise.

For these reasons, funding is being used to add to existing support for people needing to self-isolate, to continue to communicate with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and to ensure preparedness for reinstatement of shielding.

The Grant is being used to:

- **Provide additional capacity for communications and underpinning social marketing research to develop a behaviourally segment campaign to promote behaviours that will enable individuals to stay safe and protect others (£176k)**
- **Implement a local test and trace programme commissioned through the GP Care Group (£60k for first 3 months followed by review)**
- **Implement an enhanced service commissioned through the GP Care Group to ensure preparedness for shielding (£100k)**

- **Review shielding lists for children and ensure join up across acute, primary care and council services (£15k)**
- **Provide additional resource to support people who are self-isolating (food, medications, welfare advice) (£50k)**

Safe Tower Hamlets Programme (£206k)

Keep Tower Hamlets Safe, our local outbreak control plan, was published on the council website (see Appendix Two). Based on the national framework it covers plans for prevention and outbreak response in high risk settings, test and trace arrangements, integrated COVID-19 intelligence and community engagement around test and trace.

Coordination of the implementation of the place requires tight and agile programme management, clear governance with clear escalation and de-escalation processes. It also needs to be informed by high level and granular insight from both quantitative and qualitative data on COVID-19 transmission and impacts.

For these reasons, the Grant is being used to:

- **Provide additional programme management capacity to coordinate the delivery of Safe Tower Hamlets (£70k)**
- **Provide additional capacity for the daily data collation and analysis needed to support surveillance and outbreak management (£51k)**
- **Integrate the system architecture across council and health datasets (taking a whole system data linkage approach to surveillance) (£85k)**

4. Future use of the Grant

As previously stated, a two-year planning horizon has been taken for expenditure of this grant. The measures outlined set out plans for just under half of the available funding (1.4m of 3.2m) and cover initial plans for expenditure over 20/21. The future trajectory of the epidemic is uncertain and there is also a context of rapidly changing national policy. As has been the case in other boroughs, it is possible that there will be localised outbreaks that will require significant reactive use of the fund. The use of the fund is therefore under continual review, discussion and decision through the governance processes of the Local Outbreak Plan.

APPENDIX ONE – Letter to Upper Tier Local Authorities (11th June)

LOCAL AUTHORITY COVID-19 TEST AND TRACE SERVICE SUPPORT GRANT DETERMINATION 2020/21: No 31/5075

The Minister of State for the Department of Health and Social Care (“the Minister of State”), in exercise of the powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, makes the following determination:

Citation

1) This determination may be cited as the Local Authority Test and Trace Service Support Grant Determination (2020/21) [No 31/5075].

Purpose of the grant

2) The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19.

3) Further information on local authorities’ role in local outbreaks is contained in the letter from the Minister of State for Patient Safety on 23/05/2020*¹.

Determination

4) The Minister of State determines as the authorities to which grant is to be paid and the amount of grant to be paid, the authorities and the amounts set out in Annex A.

5) The amount of grant to be paid was decided upon using the 2020/21 Public Health Grant allocations as a basis for proportionately distributing the funding.

6) The grant shall be payable in one instalment in June 2020.

Grant conditions

7) Pursuant to section [31(3) and] 31(4) of the Local Government Act 2003, the Minister of State determines that the grant will be paid subject to the conditions in Annex B.

Treasury consent

8) Before making this determination in relation to local authorities in England, the Minister of State obtained the consent of the Treasury to allocate and distribute £300m.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-test-and-trace-service-support-grant/local-authority-test-and-trace-service-support-grant-determination>

APPENDIX TWO – Vision and Ambitions of Safe Tower Hamlets – the Local Outbreak Control Plan

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/news/300-million-additional-funding-for-local-authorities-to-support-new-test-and-trace-service?utm_source=c5091b80-9b26-41e5-a069-b549e9451e66&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

Our Vision

Tower Hamlets is a place where coronavirus infection is kept as low as possible, those who are most at risk from impacts of COVID-19 are protected and people can get on with their lives free from disruption. We all need to work together to make this happen.

Our Ambitions

- 1. All care homes in Tower Hamlets are places with excellent infection control and any risks of outbreaks are identified quickly and contained**
- 2. All schools in Tower Hamlets are places where staff, pupils and parents are assured that the best possible measures are in place to prevent infection and quickly identify and respond to outbreaks**
- 3. All places in Tower Hamlets where there is higher risk of spread and/or impact of infection are identified and measures are in place to prevent spread and quickly identify and respond to outbreaks**
- 4. All people living and working in Tower Hamlets have quick access to tests when needed and get results as quickly as possible**
- 5. All people in Tower Hamlets who are positive for coronavirus infection provide full information on their contacts and for these contacts to be followed up with appropriate self-isolation advice and support to self-isolate if needed**
- 6. Tower Hamlets has an exemplary surveillance system that enables rapid identification and response to potential and actual outbreaks and enables future forecasting**
- 7. All people from communities and groups where the risk of infection and impact is higher have the information and support needed to protect themselves and others, get tested and self-isolate when needed**
- 8. Whenever disparities are identified between different groups, we will ensure these are addressed as part of any response**
- 9. This plan is owned by partners across Tower Hamlets and is accountable to the people of the borough through the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board**