

## Housing Support Grant Practice Guidance

### SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

(Please note that this Section will be published)

#### **Background**

Over the course of 2018-19, the Funding Flexibilities project tested a new way of working in seven pathfinder local authorities. The aim of this work was to bring together ten grants into one grant (the Early Intervention and Support Grant Grant) to strengthen the ability of local authorities and their partners to deliver preventative services focused on early intervention for those in the greatest need and to allow local authorities greater flexibility.

On 3 October 2018 a Ministerial decision was made to split the EIPS into two, separating housing-related grants from non-housing elements for all local authorities.

[Note: An integrated impact assessment was produced at the time, which informed advice to Ministers on EIPS].

Consequently, from April 2019, Welsh Government established a Children and Communities Grant (CCG), encompassing Flying Start, Families First, the Legacy Fund, Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People, St David's Day Fund, Communities for Work Plus and Childcare and Play. We also introduced a single **Housing Support Grant (HSG)** encompassing Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement.

*Prosperity for all: the national strategy* sets out the need to deliver public services in a more collaborative and integrated way. Both grants are seeking to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. They will seek to mitigate or remove disadvantage to vulnerable people to enable them to have the same life chances as others, and therefore contribute to a more equal Wales.

Ministers have set clear expectations that the HSG and CCG should work in a seamless fashion, providing integrated services where appropriate. The work to produce and develop the new arrangements has been guided by this principle and with the objective of streamlining processes wherever possible

#### **Purpose of the Housing Support Grant (HSG)**

The purpose of the HSG grant is to address the housing and housing related support needs of the most vulnerable individuals in society through the range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. It will seek to mitigate or remove disadvantage to vulnerable people to enable them to have the same life chances as

others, and therefore contribute to a more equal Wales. As such, HSG Grant will be about accessing and maintaining a home.

The HSG bring together the following three programmes:

- Supporting People
- Elements of Homelessness Prevention Grant (2.8 million)
- Rent Smart Wales Enforcement

The outcomes from the grant we are seeking to influence reflect the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (“WFG Act”) well-being goals. There should be a focus on actively helping those who require help now and also the development of innovative approaches to delivery designed to prevent people becoming more vulnerable in the future.

Housing is also a key priority area in *Prosperity for All*, which sets out the WG vision that “We want *everyone to live in a home that meets their needs and supports a healthy, successful and prosperous life*”. The HSG supports the aim of working together to prevent homelessness and where it cannot be prevented ensuring it is rare, brief and un-repeated. To do this we need to tackle the root cause of homelessness and work to enable people to stay in their own homes longer. Therefore the HSG seeks to secure “*A Wales where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish and live a fulfilled, active and independent life*”.

### **Development of the Housing Support Grant**

In line with expectations of the WFG Act we have designed the engagement around the project to develop the Grant to be delivered in an involved way and a co-productive approach has been adopted to develop appropriate administrative, governance, planning and monitoring arrangements for the Grant.

A HSG Steering Group was established, with the purpose of advising Welsh Government on the engagement process, including assisting with the design of the engagement plan, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant stakeholders and to assist in interpreting stakeholder views so that advice to Ministers is demonstrably co-produced.

In developing the HSG, Welsh Government has worked with stakeholders, including local authorities, providers, third sector organisation and landlords, to co-produce guidance setting out the governance framework in which local authorities should operate and administer the grant. Stakeholders have welcomed the co-productive approach to developing policy options.

The draft HSG Practice Guidance document was consulted upon from the 7 October to the 28 November 2019, and a Consultation Summary Report was produced. An integrated impact assessment (IIA) was completed on the draft guidance prior to consultation. An equality impact assessment question was included in the consultation and any feedback received has been incorporated into this updated IIA.

## **Final HSG Guidance Document**

The action being considered and the basis for the assessment is the implementation of the final HSG Practice Guidance document. The document does not suggest a change in the fundamental policy to support activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation, or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. It does set out the arrangements for the operation of the grant by local authorities from April 2020, which involves some changes which might have an impact.

Key changes encompassed in the HSG Guidance includes:

- Creating of the concept of a 'Housing Support Programme' which encompasses both the statutory duty to prevent homelessness and all of the services which are offered to support access to and maintenance of suitable housing solutions. Housing Support Grant then is the mechanism by which the non-statutory elements are funded.
- The purpose of the grant has been widened to incorporate the whole spectrum of support necessary to prevent homelessness and build capacity. The new grant will be defined by its housing purpose and will be flexible as long as a positive impact on the user's ability to secure or retain a stable home can be demonstrated
- There are new arrangements for regional working. These replace the Regional Collaborative Committees (RCCs) of Supporting People with Regional Housing Support Collaborative Groups. These groups do not copy the governance role of RCCs but instead provide the forum for integrated working to be developed and link the HSG to the Regional Partnership Boards, providing support to the Housing Representative on the Board.
- Removal of time bound support.
- Allowing local authorities to make the strategic decision whether to fund alarm services where the provision improves the ability of the recipient to maintain their ability to remain in their home
- Improve integrated strategic planning process. The proposed model seeks to secure the concept of the whole system of homelessness prevention through the Housing Support Programme by integrating the strategic planning mechanisms with the statutory duty to produce a homelessness strategy.
- One set of reporting and monitoring requirements. Proposed payment and reporting mechanisms have been simplified to reduce the bureaucratic burden of the new grant.
- More detailed commissioning and procurement guidance to support local authorities to take a more flexible and innovative approach to commissioning and procurement to be able to build a more diverse and sustainable market.

## **A. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **1. Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on children and young people.**

There should be no negative impact on children and young people in terms of how the existing individual programmes are delivered within the single grant, as the guidance document is about the operational delivery of the grant by local authorities and not changing the core purpose of the programmes and the types of services funded.

The Housing Support Grant brings together there programmes all aimed at seeking to improve the outcomes of a range of individuals who are amongst the most vulnerable in society through the range of early intervention, prevention and support interventions. The main purpose of the grant is to fund housing related support services which help support people to have the capability, independence and skills to access and/or maintain a stable and suitable home. The ability to maintain a home and avoid homelessness helps provides a safe and secure environment for children.

The types of vulnerable groups supported are listed at section 2.1 but includes support for care leavers, disadvantaged families living in poverty, families with disabled children, families with Children who have experienced, or at risk of experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), and young people who are, or at risk of becoming, involved with the Youth Justice system

Following the consultation, the Guidance has been updated to expand the eligibility at also allow pre-tenancy work with individuals under 16 where the purpose is to build the individual's capacity to take upon a tenancy or right to occupy a home after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In 2018-19, over £700k was spent on young people who are care leavers and £13,704,068 on young people with support needs, through Supporting People.

### **2. Explain how the proposal is likely to impact on children's rights.**

The UN articles which are most relevant to the Housing Support Grant are:

- Article 19 Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 23 Children who have any kind of disability should have special care and support so that they can lead full and independent lives.
- Article 24 Children have the right to good quality health care and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy.
- Article 27 Children have a right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The Government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

Housing related support is targeted at helping those most in need and services provided are subject to guidance provided by Welsh Government. All grants issued by Welsh Government require local authorities to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on the services they provide and this is set out in the HSG Guidance Practice Document. The Guidance also includes a requirement for local authorities to undertake Children's Rights Impact Assessment where appropriate as part of their strategic planning.

Age is a protected characteristic and HSG services are provided for young people who are care leavers and for families with children. The ability of an individual or household to maintain a home and avoid homelessness helps provides a safe and secure environment for children.

The positive impact of the Housing Support Grant is that local authorities will have more flexibility where to channel their funding to meet the needs of those most vulnerable in society.

In addition, both the HSG and Children and Communities Grant (CCG) are both seeking to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities, and the Minister has set clear expectations that the HSG and CCG should work in a seamless fashion, providing integrated services where appropriate. The Guidance document facilitates this integration and the grant mechanisms allows for a 5% virement between both grants subject to approval by the Welsh Government.