

Cheshire West and Chester Council

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Date: 21 April 2020

To All Adult Social Care Providers

Dear Care Providers

Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to supporting care providers as we manage the impact of Covid-19 on our residents. I am writing to outline the Council's offer of support to you, aimed at ensuring that you can maximise the availability of care and support and to remain operationally and financially resilient as you respond to the many issues and challenges presented by Covid-19.

As you are aware we have already applied the annual inflationary uplifts to contract rate placements and services from the 29th March 2020 and are looking to support and grow our local market capacity by running our own local recruitment campaigns and working with other north west authorities to run a regional recruitment campaign. These two campaigns will allow us to support your own recruitment by forwarding any applications we receive on to yourselves.

We also recognise that the current situation is creating financial pressures, as additional staff and equipment costs are incurred to meet the requirements of national guidance and to ensure your staff and clients are kept safe. We therefore want to bring forward additional proposals to help you at this difficult time.

Providers can take up either one or both of the offers of support outlined below.

1. Timeliness of payments

The council recognises the importance of cash flow in responding to the challenges presented by Covid-19. Regardless of the individual contractual arrangements in place, the council has agreed to temporarily change current arrangements for making payments to Adult Social Care providers relating to care delivered in care period 2 (25th April – 22nd May 2020).

If a provider wishes to take this up, the Council will make a CHAPS payment to providers equivalent to 75% of the actual average care paid over periods 7-13 over week commencing Monday 27th April 2020. Providers should submit their claim for

actual care delivered during period 2 using the usual process, upon which a reconciliation will take place with any adjustments for monies owed to the provider / or being due to the Council for period 2 being made under the usual payment process. Payments for period 3 will similarly be brought forward. The Council will review the arrangement for periods beyond period 3 as part of its Covid-19 recovery response and discussions with providers. Our approach will be reviewed no later than 10th June, and will be extended further at the point if, in our view, the situation at the time continues to justify it

2. Extraordinary Expenditure

We recognise that providers are incurring additional costs as a result of following government guidance in responding to the Covid-19 emergency, specifically:

- additional expenditure incurred in purchasing additional or specific PPE which is over and above your regular requirements, for use in line with government guidelines; and
- additional staffing to ensure business continuity due to Covid-19 related absence (due to staff being unwell or needing to self-isolate), recognising that absences due to Covid-19 have been higher than average absence rates for many providers, and the additional cost of this recruitment

The Council agrees in principle to support providers financially by reimbursing reasonable additional expenditure incurred as a result of the above for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st May 2020. Our approach will be reviewed no later than [10th June], and will be extended further at the point if, in our view, the situation at the time continues to justify it.

We ask that providers send us evidence of the additional expenditure incurred between 1st April - 30th April 2020 in order for the Council to make an assessment on the additional costs being incurred, and determine the level of reimbursement that will be made. We will endeavour to establish a method which is fair between providers, and provides clarity to you on the result of that determination, and a method for future reimbursement, as soon as possible after 30th April. A template will be circulated this week for providers to capture evidence of spend.

PPE

We recognise that the social care sector is experiencing a national shortage of PPE. The Council is engaging regionally and nationally to resolve those issues as far as possible. A small supply of PPE has been made available to the Council from the government, and we continue to seek opportunities to procure additional PPE. We are speaking to you daily to understand the current situation in your care setting, and have issued PPE to meet urgent requirements. The Council is only able to supply PPE to providers where an urgent need is demonstrated, and where your other supply routes have failed.

From the 1st April 2020 where the Council has supplied PPE to meet an urgent need the costs of these supplies will be offset from the additional funding set out above.

Commissioned hours

As we have advised previously where service users are cancelling individual care visits due to Covid-19 you can continue to claim for these calls based on

commissioned hours. Please ensure that any such claims are submitted via the provider payment portal as a 'frustrated visit' to prevent the service user being charged.

These changes are not formal variations to your contracts with the council but temporary measures that the council is putting in place to recognise the impact that the Covid-19 outbreak is having on care providers. We will regularly review arrangements over the course of the coming months and will continue to communicate with you regularly during this time.

Please confirm by responding to this email by Friday 24th April if you wish to take up one or both of the offers of support outlined above.

Yours sincerely

Helen Brackenbury
Director of Early Help and Prevention, Contracts and Commissioning