

Adult Care Services

Director: Chris Badger



To:
All Care Homes in Hertfordshire

Management Board
Adult Care Services
Hertfordshire County Council
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Date: 26th January 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Update on Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund: guidance for Care Homes

Firstly, I want to pass on my considerable and continued thanks to you and your teams for your immense commitment to Hertfordshire's residents over the last year. The enormous compassion, empathy and skills shown by your teams have shone through in the most difficult of situations. We, at the County Council, continue to try to do everything we can to support you all as best we can, because it is your team's work that is helping us to protect and support the 1000s of people receiving social care.

On 23 December, the [government announced an extra £149 million](#) to support the rollout of LFD testing in care homes. We have now received the guidance for this funding and as with other funding streams this has been provided with formal grant conditions for both local authorities and care homes, which allow us to secure our share of the additional £149m national grant. As promised, I write to share the guidance and conditions and our proposed process for getting the funding to you as soon as possible. I have asked HCPA to lodge a copy of the Government letters and grant conditions on their website at www.hcpa.info/Covid-19. The grant will be paid in one instalment and will be available as soon as we receive your eligible claim.

Hertfordshire County Council is obliged to comply with the various provisions and conditions as set out in the Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund local authority circular and the accompanying guidance. As a recipient of the grant, you will also be obliged to comply with the same provisions and conditions (as if they were set out in full in this letter) and I would advise you to read them on the HCPA website and be confident you can comply. I have set out some of the key considerations in the remainder of this letter.

I realise that the grant conditions and requirements for this and other funding streams are not straightforward and so to help ensure you can make full use of your allocation, I have asked HCPA to organise a webinar session to address any queries you may have. This is due to take place on **Monday, 1st February from 12.30pm – 2pm.**

¹ [Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

This grant is separate from the Infection Control Grant and “the main purpose of this funding is to support additional rapid testing of staff in care homes, and to support visiting professionals and enable indoors, close contact visiting where possible”¹.

The guidance states that all funding must be used to support increased LFD testing in care settings and we are required to pass 80% of this funding to care homes^{footnote 1} (including residential drug and alcohol services) within the local authority’s geographical area on a ‘per beds’ basis.

This funding will be paid in a single instalment in January 2021 and can be used to cover expenditure from **2 December 2020** to **31 March 2021**. All funding must be spent by 31 March 2021, and any funding that remains unspent at this point will need to be returned to DHSC.

This means that I am now in a position to invite all care homes in the county, that meet the conditions below, to immediately invoice Hertfordshire County Council for £286 per registered CQC bed. Invoices should be sent to ACS.CarePayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk

The three conditions to receive this funding are that care homes (for the duration of the fund):

- are completing the Capacity Tracker regularly (at least weekly)
- have committed to continuing to complete the Capacity Tracker regularly (at least weekly) for the duration of the grant
- have committed to providing the local authority with monthly reports on their spending against this grant

In addition, care homes in receipt of LFD tests are required to register the results of all tests as per the care home testing guidance for staff and residents, or visitors and visiting professionals.

I encourage you to apply for your funding entitlement now.

Measures that this funding can be spent on

You can use this funding to pay for expenditure on the following between 2nd December 2020 and 31st March 2021:

- Paying for staff costs associated with training and carrying out LFD testing, including time taken to:
 - attend webinars, read online guidance and complete an online competency assessment
 - explain the full LFD testing process to those being tested, and ensuring that they understand all other infection prevention and control (IPC) measures
 - ensure that any LFD tests are completed properly, including overseeing the self-swabbing process, processing tests and logging results
 - wait for results, if staff are coming in to undertake tests on site prior to their shift
 - for those care homes that can undertake [indoor, close-contact visiting](#): welcoming visitors, gaining consent and overseeing that PPE is correctly donned.
- Costs associated with recruiting staff to facilitate increased testing
- Costs associated with the creation of a separate testing area where staff and visitors can be tested and wait for their result. This includes the cost of reduced occupancy where this is required to convert a bedroom into a testing area, but only if this is the only option available to the care home
- Costs associated with disposal of LFD tests and testing equipment

¹ [Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-social-care-rapid-testing-fund)

The fund is only intended to support additional rapid testing using LFDs. Existing regular PCR testing for staff and residents must continue as per [care home COVID-19 testing guidance for staff and residents](#).

Reporting Requirements for Care Homes

As the monitoring requirements for this grant require us to complete a Government return on how the funding is being spent on a monthly basis, we require providers to complete the ASC Rapid Testing Fund Spend Tracker which is attached to this letter. This is in addition to the Infection Control Fund Spend Tracker. This needs to be completed on a monthly basis and returned by the **15th of the following month**. This will detail the proposed spending of the grant and show actual spend to date. Completion and return of the Spend Tracker will be required in order to claim the Grant. If you cannot demonstrate that you have spent the total on the measures listed, you may need to pay any unspent grant allocation back.

Actions for you:

1. **Today:** please ensure you have completed the NHS Capacity Tracker and have a process to continue to do so on a weekly basis.
2. **Today:** claim your element of the grant, please do so by invoicing Hertfordshire County Council for £286 per registered bed in your care home(s) to acs.carepayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk
3. **This week:** consider how you will have spent the total grant money by March 2021 in line with the measures laid out in the conditions and start completing the Spend Tracker, in order to report back to Hertfordshire County Council on spending each month.
4. From now on but before the 15th of each month, please send the following document to acs.carepayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk: A completed copy of the ASC Rapid Testing Fund Spend Tracker, stating how you plan to spend the grant and what you have spent each month of the ASC Rapid Testing Fund in line with the grant conditions letter.
5. **By the 15th April 2021**, please send one further completed copy of the ASC Rapid Testing Fund Spend Tracker, stating how you have spent the total allocation of the ASC Rapid Testing Fund in line with grant conditions to acs.carepayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Details of specific conditions that Care providers must comply with, as per the guidance are shown in Appendix 1. Please ensure you read these carefully to ensure that you are in a position to comply with the requirements.

Support available to you

We realise these grants have been announced at different times and this can lead to confusion about how and when to claim. Our dedicated Provider Support Hotline hosted by HCPA and ACS Commissioners will be able to help you. I would also urge you to join the HCPA webinar on Monday, 1st February 2021 if you have any questions regarding these funding streams.

The hotline can answer queries for all organisations that support people with care needs (**Telephone No: 01707 708 108** or assistance@hcpa.info).

My thanks again to you and your staff teams for your continued work during this pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Badger

Director of Adult Care Services

¹ [Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 1 - Extract from [Annex C: Rapid Testing Fund grant conditions and reporting requirements](#)

Grant Conditions to be imposed on care providers

A local authority must ensure that funding which it allocates for a measure described above is allocated on condition that the recipient care provider:

- uses it for the measures outlined only
- will provide the local authority with a statement certifying that they have spent the funding on those measures for the local authority return due 30 April 2021
- if requested to do so will provide the local authority or DHSC with receipts or such other information as they request to evidence that the funding has been so spent. This may include proof that results of LFD tests have been registered
- provide DHSC or the local authority with an explanation of any matter relating to funding and its use by the recipient as they think necessary or expedient for the purposes of being assured that the money has been used in an appropriate way in respect of those measures
- will return any amounts which are not spent on those measures outlined
- is completing the Capacity Tracker regularly (at least weekly), and has committed to doing so for the duration of the grant

¹ [Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)