

Adult Care Services
Interim Director: Chris Badger



To:
All Hertfordshire County Council
Contracted CQC-Regulated
Community Care Providers in
Hertfordshire

**Management Board
Adult Care Services
Hertfordshire County Council
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Date: 7th October 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Support for Care Providers including an update on the Infection Control Fund for Community Care Providers

I want to once again pass on my sincerest thanks to you and your teams for your unwavering commitment to Hertfordshire's residents over the last six months. We know that your team's compassion, empathy and skills have shone through in the most difficult of circumstances. We have tried to do everything we can at the County Council to support you all as best we can, because it has, and will continue to be, your team's work with the 1000s of people receiving social care that has helped us to protect and support as many people as possible.

My letter of the 4th September 2020 set out our proposals to continue our support for contracted community care providers with the additional costs for staffing and PPE for the period from October to December 2020. Since writing, the Government has announced support for care providers through funding for staff with additional Infection Control grant and the supply of free PPE via the Government Portal.

As these welcome announcements from the Government of additional support for the care sector match areas in our offer of support, I need to advise you that our expectation is that your additional staffing costs associated with infection control should be covered, in the first instance, by your allocation of Infection Control Funding detailed below and that your additional PPE requirements should be met, in the first instance, by allocations from the PPE Portal. We will not be accepting additional claims for staffing costs from the 15th October 2020 (i.e. relating to staffing costs incurred up to 30th September 2020). If you are experiencing difficulties in covering your additional staffing costs associated with Covid-19, then please contact your ACS Commissioner.

Instructions for accessing PPE and claiming you Infection Control grant allocation are detailed below. You should have already received details from us (which are repeated at Appendix 1) about arrangements for accessing free PPE supplies from the Government Portal and, as registered care providers are among those services that can access Government funded PPE through the PPE Portal, this should be your primary route for accessing PPE for Covid-19.

Infection Control Fund Allocations – Round 2

We have now received guidance on the latest allocation of the national Social Care Infection Control Fund - Round 2. As before, this has been provided with formal grant conditions from the Government for both local authorities and care providers, which allow us to secure your share of the additional £546m national grant. As promised, I write to pass on the information contained in these conditions. 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 two instalments, one now and one in December / January.

Hertfordshire County Council is obliged to comply with these various provisions and conditions as set out in the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund - Round 2: 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 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 **Friday, 9th October 2020 from 1pm – 2pm.**

Claiming the First Instalment of the Infection Control Fund – Round 2 - Now

The grant allocation for the Infection Control Fund - Round 2 for Hertfordshire is slightly less overall than for Round 1. In addition, 80% of our allocation is to be distributed to residential care providers and CQC registered community care providers on a 'per bed' / 'per user' basis. We have kept the allocation "per user" at the same level as for Round 1 of the funding.

This means that I am now in a position to invite all community care providers (Homecare, Extra Care and Supported Living) in the county to immediately invoice Hertfordshire County Council for £140 per user as a first instalment. Invoices should be sent to ACS.CarePayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk

The three conditions to receive this first instalment are:

1. That the funds are to be spent on infection control – in line with the grant conditions summarised below
2. That providers must complete the CQC homecare survey (as applicable) at least weekly from 1st October 2020 and commit to continue to do so weekly until 31st March 2021.
3. That community care providers must complete the ICF Spend Tracker and return it on a monthly basis to ACS.CarePayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk. This will detail how you propose to spend the full allocation (two allocations for Round 2 equivalent to £280 per user) by March 2021 and detail spend to date to the end of each calendar month.

I encourage you all to apply for your funding entitlement now.

Clarification on the use of the Infection Control Grant

The guidance that accompanies the grant allocations details precisely what is meant by 'Infection Control'. As with the Round 1 funding, this is largely about the additional staffing costs and any associated accommodation or transport costs incurred because of measures put in place by care providers to prevent transmission of the virus between care homes and the community through staff. The guidance states:

"The purpose of this funding is to support adult social care providers to reduce the rate of Covid-19 transmission within and between care settings, in particular helping to reduce the need for staff movements between sites.....The Infection Control Fund provides financial support to providers so they can continue to pay staff their normal wages whilst self-isolating according to government guidelines. The fund aims to ensure that care workers do not lose income because they are self-isolating."

Details of specific measures that the funding supports are included in Appendix 2.

Preparing to Claim for the Second Instalment of the Infection Control Fund – Round 2 – December 2020

In order to claim the second and final instalment of this fund (an additional £140 'per user'), the grant conditions go on to specify how the council must confirm that the spend against the first instalment paid to care providers has been verified before the second instalment can be made:

As the monitoring requirements for Round 2 require us to complete a government return on how the funding is being spent on a monthly basis, we are asking providers to complete the Infection Control Spend Tracker (attached to this letter). This needs to be completed on a monthly basis and returned each month 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 second instalment of the Infection Control Grant (same amount as the first instalment). If you cannot demonstrate that you have spent the first instalment total on the measures listed, do not submit a claim until you can.

Actions for you:

1. **Today:** please ensure you have completed the CQC Homecare survey (if applicable) and have a process to continue to do so on a weekly basis
2. **Today:** claim the first instalment of the Infection Control Fund, please do so by invoicing Hertfordshire County Council for £140 per user 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 documents to acs.carepayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk:
A completed copy of the ICF Spend Tracker, stating how you plan to spend the grant and what you have spent each month of the Infection Control Fund in line with the grant conditions letter
5. After you have completed your December Spend Tracker, please send a further invoice for your second instalment of the Infection Control Fund in line with instructions above (this will not be paid without monthly completed Spend Trackers for October, November & December 2020); and

6. *By the 15th April 2021*, please send one further completed copy of the ICF Spend Tracker, stating how you have spent the total allocation of the Infection Control Fund in line with grant conditions to acs.carepayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk :

Business Continuity Plans

One of the new conditions of the grant is that we work with providers in our area on business continuity plans. To help you there is a template available on the HCPA website www.hcpa.info/business-continuity-and-contingency-checklist . In addition to this, we are working to arrange a webinar with our HCC resilience colleagues towards the end of October and I would encourage you to attend if you need assistance or guidance in this area. We will forward details of the webinar as soon as they are finalised.

State Aid

One of the conditions attached to the grant from the Minister of Care is that Hertfordshire County Council is to be satisfied that any grant funding forwarded to providers does not constitute “state aid”. Based upon the information to hand, Hertfordshire County Council is satisfied that there is no infringement of the state aid rules. However, we reserve the right to seek further information from you where Hertfordshire County Council is required to investigate further. As previously stated, the conditions detailed in the grant circular apply in this regard.

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 Friday, 9th October 2020 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
Interim Director of Adult Care Services

Appendix 1 Accessing Government Funded PPE

You should have already received details from us (which are repeated below) about arrangements for accessing free PPE supplies from the Government Portal and, as registered care providers are among those services that can access government funded PPE through the PPE Portal, this should be your primary route for accessing PPE for Covid-19.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has set up a PPE Portal which will supply PPE free of charge to care providers who are registered to use the portal. This is open until March 2021 and should be the first port of call for all COVID-19 PPE needs. Accessing government-funded PPE in this way will help to reduce the council's financial burden and will be a requirement before accessing council support.

If your organisation provides CQC-regulated community care and received an invitation to register for the PPE Portal, please do so. If you have not yet received an invitation to register on the PPE Portal, please contact the PPE Portal Customer Service team on 0800 876 6802 to register.

The amount of PPE that can be requested from the PPE Portal varies by sector. Please refer to the [government guidance](#). If you are experiencing problems with the PPE Portal or the limits do not meet your needs, please contact the PPE Portal Customer Service team on 0800 876 6802. PPE available through the PPE Portal is for COVID-19 needs only. Your business-as-usual (pre-Covid) PPE requirements should continue to be sourced from your usual business supply channels.

If you have Covid-19 PPE requirements that cannot be met by the PPE Portal or require PPE in an emergency, please contact our [Provider Hub](#). You will then be asked to provide evidence of why you were unable to access a supply via the Government's PPE portal. The Provider Hub may signpost you to your usual business supply channels which can then be reclaimed (Provider Covid-19 PPE funding for HCC Contracted Services Only is currently available to the end of December 2020). HCC contracted community care providers wishing to claim for Provider Covid-19 PPE funding will need to have followed all the instructions above and complete the **Herts Care Provider Claim Template - PPE** attached to this letter for claiming PPE costs and return it to. ACS.CarePayments@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

If you cannot get PPE through any other route and have run out or will do so imminently, please contact the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR) on 0800 915 9964. If you are still in difficulty, contact the Provider Support Hub on 01707 708 108.

Further information and guidance about PPE can found here: [COVID-19: Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#).

APPENDIX 2 - Extract from Annex C: Extension of Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund 2 Grant Conditions and Reporting Requirements

Annex C of the grant conditions specify what measures can be supported by the grant and these are shown below;

“Local Authorities must ensure that 80% of the grant is allocated to care homes and CQC regulated community care providers on a ‘per bed’ and ‘per user’ basis in order to support the following specific measures;

In respect of CQC-regulated community care providers:

- *Ensuring that staff who are isolating in line with government guidance receive their normal wages while doing so. At the time of issuing the grant circular, this includes;*
 - *staff with suspected symptoms of COVID-19 waiting for a test*
 - *where a member of the staff’s household has suspected symptoms of COVID-19 and are waiting for a test*
 - *where a member of the staff’s household has tested positive for COVID-19 and is therefore self-isolating*
 - *any staff member for a period of at least 10 days following a positive test*
 - *if a member of staff is required to quarantine prior to receiving certain NHS procedures (generally people do not need to self-isolate prior to a procedure or surgery unless their consultant or care team specifically asks them to)*
- *steps to limit the number of different people from a homecare agency visiting a particular individual or steps to enable staff to perform the duties of other team members/partner agencies (including, but not limited to, district nurses, physiotherapists or social workers) when visiting to avoid multiple visits to a particular individual*
- *meeting additional costs associated with restricting workforce movement for infection control purposes. This includes staff who work on a part-time basis for multiple employers or in other care settings, particularly care homes. This includes agency staff (the principle being that the fewer locations that members of staff work in the better)*
- *ensuring that staff who need to attend work for the purposes of being tested (or potentially in the future, vaccinated) for COVID-19 are paid their usual wages to do so*
- *steps to limit the use of public transport by members of staff (taking into account current government guidance on the safe use of other types of transport by members of staff)*

The conditions do also specify that agency or hourly rates to staff must not be inflated in order to spend the grant – normal rates must apply. This could be checked by the council.

By definition, this also means that any costs associated with deep cleaning or PPE are not to be met from this grant.

“...the local authority must not make a second allocation of funding to a provider if the authority believes that the provider has not used the money for the purposes for which it was provided it must withhold the second payment until satisfied that the provider has so used it. And if the provider has not used it or any part of it for the infection control measures for which it was provided the local authority must take all reasonable steps to recover the money that has not been so used.”