

**To All Service Providers Contracting with
Oxfordshire County Council****Stephen Chandler
Corporate Director for Adult
Services & Housing**

15 April 2020

Dear Colleague

**Covid 19: Supporting Social Care Services to Maintain Capacity and Viability
(Adult Social Care) – Update to letter dated 30 March 2020**

Can I begin by once again offering my thanks to you and all your staff for the fantastic support you have been providing to our vulnerable residents across Oxfordshire during these very difficult times. In my letter to you dated 30 March 2020, I explained that the Government has provided funding to strengthen support arrangements given to people vulnerable to Covid-19, including those needing social care. This is to support providers and provide assurance about service delivery during the Covid19 period.

On Wednesday 8 April 2020 the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services published a joint statement following discussions with national care associations setting out a number of actions councils could take to support providers as they manage through this crisis.

In response to the new joint statement, we have considered the best way of supporting our providers, including the recently established Service Sustainability Fund, and have reviewed how best we can support our providers during the coming period.

Temporary Increase to Funding

The joint statement from the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services has set out a framework for supporting the social care sector.

In response to this, and a desire to ensure all services are supported in an equitable way, the Council has agreed to pay providers and people with direct payments an additional sum of money. This will equate to 10% of the total average monthly payment to you from December 2019 to February 2020 where a provider is continuing to support service users funded by the council in April 2020; this we believe will represent normal business as usual provision and not be impacted by the Covid19 situation.

The additional funding we will make available to all providers and people using direct payments is in recognition of the cost pressures caused by Covid19, and it is expected to cover amongst other things

- a) higher dependency levels,
- b) higher staff sickness absence rates,
- c) higher administration costs due to greater volatility of support packages, and
- d) costs relating to additional personal protective equipment.

You will receive this funding as an additional Covid19 support payment on top of your on-going business as usual payments and it will be made in an additional payment run in the week commencing 20 April 2020.

The payment we make to you will initially be for one month for the period 1st to 30th April 2020. The position will be reviewed again before the end of April, in line with the national guidance, and we will communicate the outcome back to you.

In due course we may require providers to evidence via open book accounting the use of the funding to support Covid19 costs and we reserve the right to recover funding where that is considered necessary.

Service Sustainability Fund

You will see from the above that we believe that most costs that would have been covered by the Service Sustainability Fund should now be met from the additional 10% payment that we will make to you in April 2020.

As such we will not process any further general claims received into the Service Sustainability Fund after 15 April 2020, and we will also not process any unpaid claims received to date to avoid the need to reduce the additional 10% payment to take account of these.

We appreciate that times are difficult now. We will continue to respond to exceptional circumstances including where a provider is experiencing issues with on-going financial viability and is deemed to be 'at risk' of failure. In such a case we will work with the relevant provider on an open book accounting basis to agree what action can be taken to support them. This is something we have done in the past and it is something we will continue to do in the future.

I would ask you to alert us to any significant financial issue or concern at an early date. You can do this by contacting the Quality & Contracts Team using ascCOVID19@oxfordshire.gov.uk or by telephoning your usual contact in the Quality & Contracts Team. All communications will be dealt with on an 'In Confidence' basis.

Personal Protective Equipment

We know that providers are struggling to source personal protective equipment (PPE) and that this is creating overheads in terms of administration and higher costs because of the

limited availability and supply. We are working hard alongside colleagues from the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum to make sure that PPE flows into the county for emergency situations.

I should however like to stress that the supplies the Council has are limited and only for emergency use. The Government expects providers to secure PPE through normal business as usual routes, and it has set out its response in its Plan that was published on 10th April 2020; please see link below

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-plan>

Where emergencies require that the council needs to assist with the provision of PPE a charge will be deducted from future payments.

Contact us using our dedicated contact point

We have established a dedicated contact point specifically for providers to use for any matters that are Covid19 related.

In this respect please use ASCCovid19@oxfordshire.gov.uk for any issues you want to raise that are Covid related.

It is important that you use this email address so that we can be sure that your enquiry is tracked and dealt with as soon as possible.

Reviewing the Scheme

As we noted previously the Council will be continually monitoring its progress and reserves the right to amend the above should this prove necessary.

We will review the local and national situation, and any updated guidance, again at the end of April 2020 to confirm whether to extend that to May 2020.

Other Information

I just want to let you know that we will be monitoring the email address constantly and we will do our utmost to address enquiries as soon as we possibly can.

Finally, I do again want to thank you all for your fantastic work over the last few weeks and that of your staff. I know that we can expect similar pressures over the coming weeks but as ever we are grateful for the commitment your staff display and their willingness to go the extra mile for the people we all support in Oxfordshire.

Should you have any enquiries or need general support and advice outside of the above then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen T Chandler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Stephen T Chandler
Corporate Director for Adult Services and Housing
Stephen.Chandler@Oxfordshire.gov.uk