

**To All Service provider contracting with
Oxfordshire County Council**

**Stephen T Chandler
Corporate Director for Adult
Services & Housing**

30 March 2020

Dear Colleague

Covid 19: Supporting Social Care Services to Maintain Capacity and Viability (Adults and Childrens Social Care)

I know everyone in the system has been working extremely hard in recent weeks to both prepare for and to support the impact of changes linked to Covid 19. I'd like to begin by expressing both my sincere personal thanks and on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council thanks for all that you have been doing. I know it is only because of your collective and individual hard work that we as a system are as prepared as we are.

As you may know Government has provided funding to strengthen support arrangements given to people vulnerable to Covid-19, including those needing social care. Government also expects that most of this funding will be spent on meeting the increased demand for adult social care and enabling councils to provide additional support to social care services that are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this respect I am writing to update you regarding the above and to advise of the arrangements to support the sustainability of social care services in Oxfordshire, and how we will administer additional funding that has been passed to the Council to support services for adults and children.

Service Sustainability Fund

The Council has decided to create a Service Sustainability Fund to respond to the current pressures that services face, in order to provide immediate support to the social care market in a targeted way.

We are doing this by inviting providers to make application for financial support to meet their most pressing business needs where they have incurred ***additional costs that are Covid19 related***; such application to be made along with supporting evidence indicating where their business has incurred the same.

This is so we can

- Identify and help respond to operational areas that are generating financial pressures for providers
- Provide financial support where necessary to those providers where there is a perceived risk of service failure
- Work jointly with the sector to ensure on-going provider sustainability
- Monitor take up of this support and provide an audit trail for the use of the funding.

Key Principles

The Key Principles we have agreed for allocation of any additional support to providers is that its application should:

- be broadly equitable and consistent across different providers and care types
- be simple and easy to administer through existing systems (we want to avoid significant administrative overheads for both providers and the council)
- comply with procurement law and contractual arrangements
- be evidence-based and supported by 'open-book' accounting
- be affordable within the funding available
- apply for an initial period of 3 months up to end of June 2020.

What type of costs can I include?

Clearly each organisation will experience different financial pressures but as an example the following areas may be included but not limited to

- Additional overtime paid to regular staff
- Additional agency / temporary staff employed
- Additional costs of recruitment including any additional advertising and training costs for staff to cover workforce shortages
- Any additional costs with "hard to fill" roles such as waking nights/sleep-ins such as additional pay to cover shifts above normal rates
- Additional travel costs incurred by workers
- Additional equipment or PPE purchased
- Costs where Oxfordshire County Council approves the provision of support to another agency, a self-funder, or a direct payment holder
- Anything else we might reasonably assess as a direct impact of Covid 19.
- Any additional costs incurred by people with direct payments who need to continue their business as usual arrangements but also organise alternative care.

How do I apply?

The Council has sought information about arrangements from other local authorities in the South East and has developed a simple claim form that is like that used elsewhere, where such arrangements apply. (A copy is attached for your information and use).

This can be submitted at any time and once received it will be logged, quickly reviewed and either

- Immediately passed for payment or,
- where we have questions on the same, quickly responded to so that we can process claims as swiftly as possible in order to provide the necessary support

There is a dedicated contact point

We have established a new contact point for these claims. In this respect please submit your proforma via email using the heading “**Covid19 Sustainability Fund**” to ascovid19@oxfordshire.gov.uk

What information do I need to include?

The requirements are clearly explained on the Claim Form but alongside your organisation details, you will need to provide us with the following

Service Claim relates to	Where an organisation operates services at a number of locations (e.g. a number of care homes, or a number of branches/sites for community services) then please include the name of the individual care home, extra care scheme, branch or site that this claim relates to.
A Description of the Additional Cost	An explanation of what the additional cost is (e.g. PPE, staff overtime, staff agency, overtime etc - see drop down or use other and specify cost in notes). Please Note: Additional staffing costs must <u>exclude</u> amounts for “furloughed” employees where costs will be funded directly by the government.
The Amount	Expressed in £
The Period claimed for?	Start and end date of the period to be included. Claims are generally expected to be retrospective and can be made weekly, fortnightly or monthly.
Whether the expenditure has already been incurred?	Yes/No
Is evidence of the expenditure attached?	Yes/NoPlease attach supporting evidence whenever possible If not currently available please ensure it is available for future declaration if requested by the Council.
Notes	This is an area for supporting comments to help evidence the claim. Evidence may include invoices, pay data, travel claim data, recruitment & advertising costs information, payments details of PPE purchased (including evidence these were supplied).
Formal Declaration	Organisations will be expected to declare that the claim is a true and fair view of the additional costs that have or will be incurred and that the claim does not include costs that are or can be claimed from other sources. This includes through other government or other public body assistance.

Requests for financial support will initially be considered from organisations that contract with the Council.

Open Book Accounting

Where a claim is received, this will be progressed with an expectation that alongside the information identified above, such claims will be considered on an 'open book' accounting basis.

To aid processing times we are asking providers to supply evidence to support their claim up front where at all possible. Where that isn't possible the Council reserves the right to request such open book accounting information and evidence at a later date to demonstrate that costs have been incurred as per the claim

What happens once my claim is submitted?

Once your claim is submitted you will receive an acknowledgement within 2 days.

Your claim will be reviewed, and confirmation of its progress will be notified to you, including whether or not we require additional information.

We do not know the volume or value of claims that will be received but we are aiming to review all claims from existing contracted providers within 72 working hours with payment following thereafter (usually 3 working days after date of decision). Claims from other providers may take longer to process depending on the value of the claim and need for follow up information.

Once agreed payment will be made through BACs on immediate payment terms.

What if I need to contact you about my claim?

Should you have any questions about the process, the progress of a claim that has already been submitted, or wish to provide us with further supporting information then please ensure that any enquiries are sent by email to ascCOVID19@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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

This is a new scheme that has been specifically set up to support adults and children's social care during the current Covid19 crisis through to end of June 2020. As such the Council will be continually monitoring its progress and reserves the right to amend the process as required should this prove necessary.

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 your claim and any resulting enquiries as soon as we possibly can.

Finally, I do want to again reiterate my thanks to you all for your fantastic work over the last few weeks and that of your staff.

I know that we'll feel the same 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 scheme 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