

Your Reference: CE_MG_111121_364

15th November 2021

Professor Martin Green OBE
Chief Executive
Care England
40 Artillery Lane
London
E1 7LS

Dear Professor Green

Many thanks for your letter on behalf of Care England regarding our fee levels, cost of care and methodology for Somerset's Care Homes. This response will indeed answer your specific queries but I would also urge you to speak with providers in our County and the local Registered Care Providers Association who we work very closely with and have financially supported to help represent all of our care provision not just their members. Their views would be more relevant than a desktop exercise or sums based on national assumptions.

Somerset commissioned an external Fair Cost of Care exercise 4 years ago in partnership with our providers across residential, nursing and domiciliary care. This included extensive consultation both during the work but also on the recommendations. Part of that work also included recommendations around agreed mechanisms for the cost of care increases in the future including inflation rates, financial resources, market supply and the living wage. Since that exercise, fee setting has been a collaborative process beginning in November prior to any spring decision and the new financial year. Again this is a transparent process as we work in partnership with our providers and do not view them as suppliers or commodities.

On the whole our providers express good approval ratings for the relationship with the Local Authority and recognise the role our training, quality improvement and support teams play in adding value to their businesses, These factors also show that

good working and a fair cost of care are not simply about published headline rates but also the support given – support which has made me very proud particularly during the last two years. Somerset has very few closures of homes and a vibrant local care home market with little need for national care provision.

I would also wish to point out that the base level fees published are not always the fee paid. Each person's needs are different and we tailor our fees accordingly in a personalised approach. We have also supported providers over the last two years over and above the various government grants both financially and with mutual aid for staffing, recruitment and economic/business support, in addition to the regular support that I have previously outlined.

On your specific point around the dementia fee rates, Somerset, in partnership with its providers, developed a dementia residential rate that was higher than the base dementia nursing one, due to the increasing complexity and challenging behaviours that were being experienced in residential settings where care can actually be more demanding due the cohort generally being younger and more active. Our providers led this move, indicating that in this sphere of care, it was at times less resource costly for nursing dementia clients than the residential ones. We have a specific fee for certain homes in these categories and you will note that our general residential and nursing fees do not follow the pattern that you describe.

Finally, as per previous years, we have already begun to engage with our providers on the cost of care for 2022/23. We have confidence in our trusted processes and relationships and will continue to support our care market as key partners in our health and care strategy. Once again, I would urge you to speak with local providers to gain a better understanding of the work that we have undertaken in Somerset.

Best wishes



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