

19 February 2021

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

Dear Professor Green,

Re: Support for Care Home Providers in Knowsley

Thank you for your correspondence dated 4 February 2021.

Knowsley Council is acutely aware of the impacts and challenges that the pandemic has brought to our care home providers, which is reflected in the substantial support, both financial and other support, we have continuously provided since the outset of the pandemic.

I have taken each of your questions and addressed them separately below:

1. The nature of the additional and direct financial Covid support the Council has provided since the commencement of the pandemic.

Since the commencement of the COVID 19 pandemic, Knowsley Council has introduced two Council financed schemes aimed at supporting care homes to remain sustainable.

A "VOID" Scheme ensures all homes that are closed due to an outbreak of COVID 19 are maintained at a minimum of 90% occupancy. The total amount of funding that has been made available to care homes to fund voids £0.641m.

The Council also has a Sickness Absence Scheme in place which mirrors the governments job retention scheme, and offers up to 80% of a care workers salary to be paid as a result of COVID 19 related sickness absence for the duration of their absence, including any self-isolation periods as a result of contact tracing.

This scheme was offered prior to the Infection Prevention Control Grant and runs alongside it for our providers. The total amount of funding that has been made available to care homes and other community service providers to fund sickness absence is £1.6m.

The Council has also provided all Care Homes with a permanent uplift of 5% for the Financial Year 2020/21 totalling £0.131m

In addition to the direct financial support provided by both the Council and the government, the Council has also provided free PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to all regulated and non-regulated services at a total cost to the Council of £1.3m

In total the Council has set aside £3.672m in uplifts and funding schemes both directly and indirectly since 1 April 2020 to support care homes and other regulated community service providers with the pressures relating to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The table below provides a breakdown of the total funding made available by the Council to providers of regulated and non-regulated community services.

Funding Stream	Care Homes	Other CQC Regulated/Non-Regulated Services including Care Homes	Total
Voids Scheme	£0.641m		£0.641m
Sickness Absence Scheme		£1.6m	£1.6m
Uplifts	£0.131m		£0.131m
Personal Protective Equipment		£1.3m	£1.3m
Total	£0.772m	£2.9m	£3.672m

You will be aware that the Council has also received two rounds of Infection Prevention Control Funding (IPC) from central government which has been passported to care homes, as well as Rapid Testing funding, and more recently has also received funding to support providers with workforce capacity in the form of a Workforce Capacity Grant.

The grant conditions stipulated that the Council should passport 75% of round one IPC funding to care homes at a minimum, and in round two this was increased to 80% and included other regulated services. This remaining 25% and 20% from each of the rounds was left up to Local Authorities to use at their discretion. In Knowsley, the discretionary amounts were made available to other CQC regulated services such as Domiciliary Care, Extra Care and Supported Living Services.

The table below provides a breakdown of the total central government funding made available.

Funding Stream	Care Homes	% Split	Other CQC Regulated/Non-Regulated Services	% Split	Total
IPC Round 1 Funding	£1,064,589.75	75%	£354,863.25	20%	£1,419,453.00
IPC Round 2 Funding	*£1,396,177.60. (Care home element £732,993.24)	80%	£349,044.40	20%	£1,745,222.00
Rapid Testing Fund	£280,449.60	80%	£70,112.40	20%	£350,562.00
Workforce Capacity Fund	Care home spend will be determined by applications.	N/A	Other regulated/non-regulated services spend will be determined by applications.	N/A	£488, 528.00
Total Funding to date	£2,077,488.00		£774,020.05		£4,003,765

*Includes Care homes, Domiciliary Care, Supported Accommodation & Extra care as per the governments grant conditions.

2. Of the financial support referred to in (1) above, is it continuing? If not, for what period was it provided? If it is continuing, for how long will it continue

The two Council schemes in (1) above have been in place since 1 April 2020 and will continue until 31 March 2021. These arrangements will be reviewed at the end of March 2021 in response to the continuing impact the pandemic is having on care home providers and the wider social care market.

3. Of the financial support referred to in (1) above, did it include any support to address the financial impacts of falling occupancy levels?

Please see response to (1) above.

4. What was the care home occupancy level in your local area in March and April 2020 and what was this occupancy level in December 2020 and January 2021?

During March & April 2020, the average occupancy level in care homes was 83.1%. During December 2020, the average occupancy in care homes was 81.6%, and during January 2021 average occupancy was at a rate of 83.9%.

5. What fee level increases are being proposed by the Council for the year 2021/22?

The Government has confirmed that the current funding levels for social care would remain static for the 2021/2022 financial year and the Council is currently in budget setting process for the next financial year. However, beyond this, and funding for social care remains unclear.

Indeed, the main source of additional funding the Government expects to meet the demographic pressures, costs of the National Living Wage and Covid-19 pressures is in the form of a 3% Adult Social Care Precept on local Council Tax Payers. This provides Knowsley with growth in funding of £1.2m and the growth required for the Adult Social Care budget is in excess of £4m to support health and social care services that have been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

The Government is yet to outline in any detail how the country will recover from the crisis, including future funding allocations to the Council and Adult Social Care and, consequently, funding for the sector remains extremely uncertain. In addition, we know that Adult Social Care is changing nationally and locally due to demographic changes, increased levels of need and changing expectations of those who need care and support, which will be exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis and pressure to pay more to staff.

Due to the uncertainty in relation to the future funding for both local government and social care, no further commitments can be made at this point to indicate the future level of resources that will support care providers. However, the Council has a successful record in protecting Adult Social Care and providing investments.

6. If not already addressed within the answers to questions (1) to (5) above, what other forms of financial support for care providers is the Council considering for the remainder of the financial year 2021/22 to assist the sustainability of their care service provision during this period?

Please see response to (1) above. The current financial support arrangements will be reviewed in light of the developing pandemic in March 2021.

7. Has the Council consulted on any of the foregoing; if not does it propose doing so and when does it propose doing so

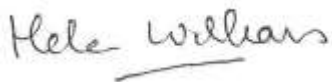
The Council has a duty to consult with Residential and Nursing Care providers in regard to setting the fees and rates for the forthcoming financial year. The Council intends to consult with providers before 1 April 2021.

I hope that the above information adequately responds to the queries you have raised and demonstrates the Council's commitment to supporting Care Home providers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A commitment is also made that the council will continue to lobby the Government for full funding for the impact of COVID-19, the publication of the Green Paper on Social Care Funding Reform, fair pay to care workers, and for the review of Local Government Funding (support for Adult Social Care) to be prioritised through the next Comprehensive Spending Review(s).

We welcome and request that Care England join Local Authorities to advocate for adequate funding for Social Care and for a better deal for the workforce.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Helen Williams".

Helen Williams
Head of Commissioning