



Wandsworth Council

Adult Social Care and Public Health
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Private and Confidential

Professor Martin Green OBE

Chief Executive

Care England

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date: 12 March 2021

Dear Professor Green,

Financial Support to Care Providers

Thank you for your letter dated 15 February regarding financial support to care home providers during the Covid-19 Pandemic, in which you raise some valid points.

I acknowledge the human cost of this pandemic which has been truly awful and the impact which has been felt by our care homes in Wandsworth.

Wandsworth Council took prompt action at the start of the pandemic to support the local care provider market, both financially, and with other support for the care workforce, working on the front line in difficult circumstances.

A comprehensive package of support was made available to care providers, as set out in our published [Care Home Support Plan](#) and additional measures have been implemented as part of the [Adult Social Care Winter Plan 2020-21](#). This includes a multi-agency Care Home Oversight Group, set up by the Council, to maintain oversight of the care market, target support where needed and support care providers. This has been well received by our providers.

In terms of the direct financial impact on our care homes, I confirm that the Council acted quickly in delivering additional financial relief to our providers, meeting their additional costs arising from Covid, as well implementing a 3% fee uplift to all placements and providing PPE to all of our providers and ensuring supplies continued throughout this period.

Combined supplier relief payments and additional Government funding support of £6.7m have been given to care providers, including the Infection Control, Workforce Capacity and Rapid Testing Grants. All of this has been allocated out to our providers as per grant conditions, including the discretionary elements where we have focused on care homes and domiciliary care providers in particular and we are working with our

Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health: Liz Bruce

providers to ensure this funding can be used flexibly, within the grant conditions set by the Government.

We continue to maintain regular and direct contact with all of our providers, co-ordinated with our NHS and CCG partners as well as Public Health colleagues, particularly those care homes and services where there are outbreaks and those where additional support is need. A whole range of support ranging from free PPE; enabling access to testing; supporting with vaccination access; contributing to weekly webinars; detailed levels of provider information on our website through to Facebook Portals into homes to enabling virtual visiting are examples and have been continuous throughout the pandemic.

Care home occupancy levels in March last year were running in line with national levels pre-pandemic, however these reduced to 78% in July 2020. Occupancy levels were at 74% in December 2020 and 75% in January 2021, and we continue to monitor occupancy levels locally.

Our regular contact with providers particularly affected indicates that the support they are receiving, including the receipt of government grant funding, is both helpful and well received. We are also working in partnership with our sub-regional partners and CCG with additional block contracting arrangements put in place for areas of particular risk. These will continue until at least the end of this financial year and will be subject to continued review.

The Council is currently reviewing its approach to uplifts for financial year 2021/22 and will be shortly engaging with the market, once the Council's 2021/22 budget has been finalised. It would, therefore, not be appropriate to pre-empt that decision and communication in this response. We are committed to the general principle of sustainable pricing for our providers and, separately, we have focused work planned to address any financial sustainability issues as a direct result of the pandemic. These will be dealt with on the basis of individual discussions with providers adversely impacted, particularly by high vacancy rates directly attributable to the pandemic.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Bruce". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Liz Bruce

Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health