

APPENDIX 2 - SUPPORT TO DOMICILIARY CARE PROVIDERS

BACKGROUND

1. Cardiff Council's Social Services are required to help people with care and support needs to live independently, supporting them with reasonable adaptations to their homes and providing services in a way that meets their needs and outcomes.
2. Domiciliary care services support people with additional physical and wellbeing needs to live at home with care and support as long as possible. These services are currently commissioned by the Council to approved external providers to meet assessed needs of our local residents.
3. The COVID 19 pandemic has created additional financial pressures for our adult social care providers, including in particular staffing costs due to sickness, agency cover and overtime, equipment to support work during the pandemic and travel costs. In addition, we have observed a reduction in service referrals and activity during the pandemic. It is hypothesised that this reduction in activity is linked to two key reasons:
 - Reduction in referrals. This may be linked to fear or uncertainty when requesting an 'at home' delivery service during a time of lockdown and social distancing, but also linked to family members and carers staying at home and having the capacity to look after family, friends and loved ones.
 - Reduction in activity. Alongside the above points, Social Services have noticed an increase in deaths in the domiciliary care caseload within the pandemic timeline. Whilst we cannot say for certain at this time if this is linked with COVID 19, it is highly likely.

ISSUES

4. As a result of the above points and the impact of COVID 19, Social Services had significant concerns about the financial sustainability of local Domiciliary Care providers. The Council wished to act as efficiently as possible to support providers through the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic. This involved the implementation of immediate measures to support to the sector, which were subsequently refined into a more tailored support package as soon as practicable. There is an expectation that additional costs arising from the provision of this support will be reimbursed from Welsh Government's Covid-19 Hardship Fund, which includes a sum of £40 million to support adult social care services. The funding is confirmed up until the end of May 2020.

Support to Providers

5. From the 22nd March, the Council implemented an arrangement to pay domiciliary care providers based on their 'planned care' hours. As planned care hours exceed the number of care hours that providers usually deliver, this measure acted as a quick and easily implementable mechanism for getting an initial uplift out to Providers.

6. During April, work took place with Providers to refine the support provided. Support arrangements were developed with regard to Government guidelines issued in Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 02/20. This PPN provided guidance for public bodies on paying suppliers during the Covid-19 outbreak in order to ensure service continuity. In line with this guidance, the Council worked with representatives from the Domiciliary Care sector to review additional costs experienced as a result of Covid-19.
7. This work resulted in an updated support package with effect from 18 May 2020. This replaced the previous arrangement, and comprises two elements which are aimed at targeting the two separate issues affecting Providers – additional cost and loss of income. It includes:
 - An hourly uplift of £1.80 per hour to reflect additional Covid-19 related costs. This uplift applies to delivered care hours.
 - A commitment to continue to pay Providers in line with the average care hours that they were providing in the eight weeks prior to the pandemic. This ensures that if providers experience a reduction in Council commissioned activity relating to COVID 19, the Council will support provider sustainability by paying for the usual level of care.

Outcome

8. The Domiciliary Care Association has been consulted about the proposal, and all providers have been issued with guidance and a FAQ, which outlines rationale and processes for the COVID 19 financial uplifts. The Association advised the Council that they do not believe the £1.80 per hour uplift is sufficient for the additional costs associated with COVID 19. However, the Council's Social Services and Finance colleagues used information provided by the Association regarding additional costs for calculations (amongst other evidence), and continue to recommend that £1.80 per hour is an appropriate amount.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

9. Whilst the support outlined in this appendix exceeds existing budgetary provision for 2020/21, the arrangements are considered to be within the budgetary framework on the basis that additional expenditure is directly attributable to the Covid-19 crisis. As such, there is an expectation that costs will be reimbursed from the Welsh Government's Covid-19 Local Authority Hardship Fund, which includes a sum of £40 million in support of Adult Social Care across Wales. The funding is confirmed up until the end of May 2020, although indications are that this will be extended, and as such, these arrangements will need to be kept under review.
