

ASC Infection Control Fund Ring-Fenced Grant 2020

Suggestions for spend

The Infection Control Fund Grant is £600m for the country. Surrey's share is £19m. The primary purpose of the fund is to support adult social care providers, including those with whom the local authority does not have a contract, to reduce the rate of Covid-19 transmission in and between care homes and support wider workforce resilience.

The Surrey Care Association is grateful for any new funding coming into the Social Care sector at this time, and sees control of transmission as essential to defeating our Covid-19 foe. However, there are three concerns with this grant. The first is that the conditions are tight, and preclude providers spending on some areas essential to infection control, such as PPE (although PPE can be funded from the 25% not passported through). The second is that good providers have already taken many of the measures which this funding can be applied to, and it can only be applied retrospectively to 13 May, when the fund was announced. The third is that the condition relating to full pay whilst fundable from this grant creates a risk of discontent and potential discrimination claims from people who were not paid for absence before or after.

Despite these concerns we are keen to ensure that the grant funding is spent on **worthwhile** items in line with the spirit of the conditions which have been set.

We attach below some ideas of items or expenditure which we believe sit within each condition. This list is **not exhaustive or exclusive**, and there will be other items on which you will wish to spend the grant. We suggest that if you are looking to spend on big-ticket items which are not on the list then it would be worthwhile agreeing with SCC in advance to avoid potential dispute in the future.

We have shared and discussed this list with Surrey County Council in advance of the grant funding being issued and we believe they are satisfied that these items fall within the conditions. Our caveat, of course, is that clear guidance about what the grant can be spent on has not been issued by Government to Local Authorities or Providers, so your decision about what you choose to spend the money on will be at your own risk.

Condition 1:

Ensuring that staff who are isolating in line with government guidance receive their normal wages while doing so. At the time of issuing this grant determination this included staff with suspected symptoms of Covid 19 awaiting a test, or any staff member for a period following a positive test.

- Staff will be absent for a variety of Covid-related reasons. They may have had a positive test and/or be symptomatic. They may be isolating because a housemate has a diagnosis or symptoms. And now they may be isolating as a result of the test and trace programme. The grant is intended to ensure that people receive full pay when absent for these reasons. It is reasonable to assume that both basic pay and on-costs can be funded.
- Organisations with less than 250 staff have been allowed to reclaim SSP for the first 2 weeks of staff absence since March. Staff can now be paid in full (from 13 May 2020). This grant could be applied to reclaiming the remainder of the wages and on-costs (80-90%) relating to the two-week period, and full wages thereafter.
- Organisations with more than 250 staff have not been allowed to reclaim SSP during the epidemic. Staff can now be paid in full (from 13 May 2020). This grant could be applied to reclaim their wages and on-costs for periods of absence.

Condition 2:

Ensuring, so far as possible, that members of staff work in only one care home. This includes staff who work for one provider across several homes or staff that work on a part time basis for multiple employers and includes agency staff (the principle being that the fewer locations that members of staff work the better.

- One off payment to staff for complying with organisational requirements put in place to keep themselves and the people we support safe. These requirements will include, for example, agreeing to:
 - Restrict working just to your organisation
 - Restrict working contracted hours to one service (or even one area within one service)
 - Restrict working overtime to the 'home' service
 - Restrict working to specified shifts to enable cohorting
 - Working additional shifts to avoid the need to use agency staff
 - Comply with PPE requirements
 - Comply with organisational recommendations for keeping safe outside work, including maintenance of social distancing, adherence to Government guidelines, avoiding public transport, avoiding busy shops and minimising contact with people who are at high risk of contracting covid-19

The one-off payment could be contingent on staff signing an agreement.

- Where providers have agreed with agencies to have the same dedicated staff, and for these to only work for them, then their entire agency spend may qualify under the grant (from, say, June 1 on).
- Staff often work in different settings for differing wages (for example, double time weekends and better night pay). Where people are prevented for earning this additional money then it would be reasonable to pay and reclaim from the grant.

Condition 3:

Limiting or cohorting staff to individual groups of residents or floors/wings, including segregation of COVID-19 positive residents

- Costs of employing additional staff to enable cohorting.
- Costs of employing additional staff to provide additional one-to-one support for people who need extra support due to isolating.
- Extra costs incurred employing staff whose role has changed to support segregation. An example would be an Activities coordinator who is working more hours to providing activities on a one-to-one basis rather than a group basis.
- Costs of IT connectivity which support cohorting and also enable online communication with external doctors, nurses, relative sect to restrict visitation and reduce cross-infection.

Condition 4:

To support active recruitment of additional staff if they are needed to enable staff to work in only one care home or to work only with an assigned group of residents or only in specified areas of a care home, including by using and paying for staff who have chosen to temporarily return to practice, including those returning through the NHS returners programme. These staff can provide vital additional support to homes and underpin effective infection control while permanent staff are isolating or recovering from Covid-19.

- Costs associated with recruiting people specifically to enable staff to work in one care home.
- Costs associated with recruiting staff to enable cohorting within a care home.

- Costs of recruiting staff to reduce the reliance on agency staff.

In all instances it would seem reasonable that these additional recruitment costs should be covered by this grant. The costs would include:

- Recruitment advertising
- Administration time for recruitment – manager time for interviews, admin time for applying for DBS's etc.
- Supernumerary time for training of new staff
- Training costs of new staff
- Any supernumerary time required to on-board new starters
- Any find a friend etc. scheme payouts or other incentives paid to staff for recruitment.

Condition 5:

Steps to limit the use of public transport by members of staff. Where they do not have their own private vehicles, this could include encouraging walking and cycling to and from work and supporting this with the provision of changing facilities and rooms and secure bike storage or use of local taxi firms.

- Costs of taxis for staff to get to work who would normally travel on public transport. Note here that this might be treated a benefit-in-kind, so the grant could also be used to fund the tax element.
- Contribution to the cost of purchasing bicycles (or electric bicycles) for staff who would commit to cycling to work. Note here that this offer would really need to be made to all staff to avoid discrimination. This could be implemented in conjunction with the existing Bike2work scheme to avoid a tax charge on the staff member.
- Rental of cars or minibuses to enable staff to avoid public transport.
- Subscriptions to Zipcar or similar car share schemes.
- Purchase or lease of pool cars to enable people to avoid using public transport.
- Temporary employment of drivers to collect and drop staff.
- Grants to staff who will commit to walking to work to buy walking boots (perhaps a bike or boot grant to all staff to encourage coming to work under their own steam?).
- Bike racks and storage facilities.
- Creation or upgrading of changing rooms.
- Showers.
- Vacant room(s) being blocked for staff changing, with the void cost being funded from the grant at the LA rate.

Condition 6:

Providing accommodation for staff who proactively choose to stay separately from their families in order to limit social interaction outside work. This may be provision on site or in partnership with local hotels.

- Creation or upgrading of staff accommodation.
- Hotel costs for staff who are willing to stay away from home to keep safe
- Purchase or rental of caravans or temporary accommodation to be put on site to accommodate staff who are willing to stay away from home to keep safe.