

Surrey County Council
County Hall, Penrhyn Road
Kingston-upon-Thames
KT1 2DN
asc.covid19@surreycc.gov.uk

Date: 27th March 2020

ADULT SOCIAL CARE COVID-19 FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFER TO CARE PROVIDERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

Surrey County Council (SCC) recognises that the COVID-19 outbreak is placing enormous challenges on care providers that the Council commissions care and support services from.

This letter sets out the Council's financial support offer to help providers meet these challenges. We hope you will recognise this as a significant commitment from the Council to the maintenance of organisational viability at a time of immense pressure. We have tried to capture all of the key issues that have been brought to our attention in recent days in this letter. However, if you have any questions or concerns not addressed by this letter, or if you would like to clarify any of the content below, then please don't hesitate to contact us by writing to asc.covid19@surreycc.gov.uk, which is now the central point for all ASC COVID-19 correspondence.

Home care

In recognition of the vulnerability of the sector, all Home Care providers on the SCC's Approved Provider Status (APS) framework will be paid a payment on account equivalent to the cost of the care plans of all service users each provider supported as at the end of January 2020 (prior to impact of COVID-19) for the period 23rd March 2020 – 28th June 2020 (the closest dates to a 3 month period based on the home care billing cycle). In other words SCC will make a payment in advance for the first 3 months of 2020/21. We will write to each provider separately to confirm their payment on account amount. Payments will be processed on 1st April 2020 so should be cleared in provider accounts by 6th April 2020.

During the period 23rd March 2020 – 28th June 2020, home care providers are requested to please submit invoices for actual care delivered in the normal way. The reason for this is so that the Council will be able to record actual services delivered against each person's care plan, and ensure that where people pay a contribution towards their care they are only charged for actual services delivered.

SCC recognises that it may be necessary to vary the level of support that is delivered at short notice in responses to immediate emerging issues during this period. If less support is delivered (e.g. due to a person self-isolating) then providers should submit invoices based on the actual hours of care delivered. If higher levels of support are required, then in this period SCC is happy for providers to deliver up to 15% more care than the agreed care plan without prior consultation with ASC staff. If the additional care required is more than 15% above the agreed care plan, providers are asked to please contact the relevant ASC team for this to be agreed.

At the end of June 2020 the cost of actual services delivered and invoiced will be compared to the value of the payment on account. The reason for doing this is to ensure that where the value of services delivered is greater than the payment on account, SCC will pay this difference (indeed payments may already have been made by this point if this is case). Please note that if the value of services delivered is less than the payment on account,

SCC will not look to claw back the money. Providers will keep the difference, with normal payments then commencing from 29th June 2020 onwards, unless it is agreed further extraordinary action is required in light of the latest status of the pandemic at this time. This is on the express conditions that providers continue to pay their staff for the delivery of planned care where this is less than actual hours in the period (in order to support workforce retention), and providers are responsive to the needs of SCC during the COVID-19 pandemic, including responding promptly to hospital discharge requests.

In circumstances where home care providers offer support to private clients who fund their own care, and these private clients are declining care, please can providers notify SCC by writing to asc.covid19@surreycc.gov.uk if they believe those private clients are being unsupported and are in a vulnerable position.

Day care

Where day care services continue to be delivered, either as normal or on an alternative basis (e.g. the main day centre is closed, but support is delivered to people in their own homes), providers should continue to invoice SCC in the normal way at the current agreed prices.

If the cost of alternative provision is greater than the cost of normal service provision, then these costs should be added to invoices and SCC will pay these costs.

SCC is willing to offer payments on account for the period April to June 2020 in line with home care providers. If your organisation is continuing to provide a form of day care during this period and you would like a payment on account, then please let us know and we will arrange this.

Where day care services are closed and not being delivered on an alternative basis, then providers should not send invoices for these services. This is in line with the overarching principle of SCC continuing to pay for services at an individual client level based on actual services provided.

If the closure of day care services creates significant financial pressures for your organisation, for instance because costs are still incurred but income is not forthcoming, then SCC will make a 3 month hardship payment equivalent to the amount day care providers would normally have been paid (taking into account any other support providers are able to access, e.g. from central government). This payment would be made on the basis that providers continue to pay their staff and make them available for redeployment to support the delivery of other forms of care. Providers will be asked to submit claims through the financial hardship process (see below).

Residential, nursing and supported living care services

Although SCC acknowledges that providers of nursing, residential and supported living care services will also face significant challenges in relation to COVID-19, SCC judges that cash flow is less of an immediate concern. This is because the vast majority of these services are already paid for on an automatic schedule basis each month based on agreed care plans. SCC does not therefore propose to offer payments on account as standard for these services. However, if providers are facing serious issues relating to their cash flow then please contact us setting these issues out and we will consider whether some form of payment on account could be made.

Payments for these services will continue to be made based on the current agreed care plan. If the level of care delivered reduces due to circumstances in this period, then SCC

will not reduce payments to providers. If the level of care required significantly increases then providers should contact SCC and arrangements will be made to pay these additional costs. Again the principle of a 15% tolerance without the need for prior consultation with ASC will apply, although we would generally expect this to be less common in accommodation based support services. It is likely SCC may wish to pay for additional costs at an organisational rather than individual client level to avoid the need to temporarily change individual care plans.

Where an individual is absent from a care setting because they choose to self-isolate with their family at home, SCC will continue to pay the current agreed cost for the care package through the monthly automatic schedule payments.

Payments for all other absences (e.g. admissions to hospital) and permanent ceases (e.g. an individual passing away) will be made in the normal way at an individual client level. If however void periods during the COVID-19 pandemic lead to significant financial pressures for providers, then upon request SCC will consider making a form of hardship payment as set out below.

All other forms of care

This includes a range of support services in the community including outreach, short term breaks and extra care housing. The same general principles apply for these services:

- Providers should only invoice based on actual services delivered.
- Payments on account for April to June 2020 will be made upon request where services continue to be delivered.
- Providers can increase support by up to 15% without prior consultation with ASC to manage emerging issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- If services are not delivered and this causes financial pressures, then providers will be able to submit financial hardship claims.

COVID-19 Financial Hardship claims

SCC will be setting up a process for providers of all services commissioned by SCC to submit COVID-19 financial hardship claims. The framework for this process will be approved by the SCC's Cabinet on 31st March 2020 and we will send a follow up letter setting out the process in more detail when the Cabinet has confirmed the framework.

The general approach is likely to be that organisations will be asked to set out additional costs and other financial pressures they have experienced, the extent to which they have been able to mitigate these pressures by seeking other forms of support (e.g. accessing some of the support on offer from central government) and the residual cost pressures that they request that SCC funds in order to support their ongoing viability.

We would generally expect that hardship payments would not be required where payments on account are made to providers, as SCC is not looking to claw back funding if the value of actual services delivered is less than the payment on account.

Providers who provide support to people funded by SCC through Direct Payments

SCC recognises that care providers who offer support services that are commissioned directly by individuals who receive Direct Payments from SCC may also face financial challenges during this period. In many instances of course providers will be commissioned to provide care services by both SCC and Direct Payment recipients.

Where providers offer alternative services at higher cost or are required to deliver more care, SCC will ensure people's Direct Payments are topped up as necessary to meet these additional costs.

If providers suffer significant financial pressures as a result of closures or reductions to services funded by DP recipients, then providers will be able to factor these into the hardship claim process for SCC to consider.

SCC will maintain clear communication with DP recipients and support organisations such as the Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC) throughout this period.

Changes to contractual terms

Notwithstanding the variations set out in this letter, all other existing contractual terms will remain unchanged. If a provider wishes to permanently change any contractual terms, for instance the rate paid for care services, then they must contact SCC to discuss and agree these changes in the normal way.

We would like to express our sincere thanks for your continued support and dedication in supporting Surrey's most vulnerable residents during this time of national crisis, and we look forward to continuing to work with you when we all get out the other side.

In order to avoid delay or misdirection, we would ask you to please send any replies and correspondence to asc.covid19@surreycc.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Sinead Mooney
Cabinet Member for Adults



Simon White
Executive Director for Adult Social Care