From Helen Whately MP
Minister of State for Care

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29th July 2020

Dear colleague,

On 13th May the Government announced that it would make available a £600m Infection Control Fund for Adult Social Care and this was distributed to local authorities on 22nd May. The purpose of this fund is to support the implementation of infection control measures advised in the Care Home Support Package, particularly the restriction of movement of workers between different care settings and full payment for staff who are required to self-isolate. The importance of this in reducing transmission has again been outlined in the letter from David Pearson CBE, Chair of the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce, on 3rd July.

Thank you for all your work to distribute this fund to care providers at pace, including to those who support self-funded residents with whom your authority may not have had existing contracts. I am aware that the fund included a number of conditions to support its objectives of funding and tracking increased infection control measures in social care, and this in turn placed extra demands on local authorities – so I am also grateful to you and your colleagues for the work you have done to put this into effect.

I am pleased to see that 86% of the first tranche of funding has been allocated to providers, with 42 local authorities distributing their full allocation of funding to support during this challenging time. I can also report that the second tranche of funding has now been paid to local authorities on 24th July. In the spirit of transparency, we have published data provided by local authorities on gov.uk: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-infection-control-fund, which my officials verified with your offices last week.

I am now asking that each local authority also publishes up to date information on its spend against the Infection Control Fund on its own website, to ensure there is sufficient clarity over how the significant public investment is supporting front-line social care services. This spending information (Annex E of the Grant circular) should be updated, including any description of local context, and included on the same weblink that has been provided to DHSC officials - the full collated list of council weblinks can be found here[1].

A number of local authorities and providers have raised with me the clawback conditions and my policy intent in including them. Some providers have told me that this has become a barrier to spending the money. Where providers have used funding on infection control measures as set out in the Grant Circular or as discussed with the Department, then the
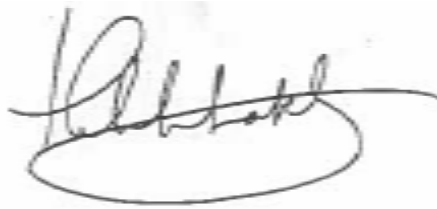
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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-care-home-support-council-transparency-data

Department's unequivocal position is that this will not be clawed back. I also expect the local authority to provide assurance to each provider to the same effect.

I should be clear that the principal policy intent of the clawback provision is to ensure that local authorities distribute all the £600m funding to providers as quickly as possible, and that the department will reclaim any funding that is not distributed by local authorities to providers. While it is also correct that the clawback provisions enable us to recover any grant that is not used for the purposes it was given, to comply with state aid rules, as I have set out we do not envisage using it for such purposes unless there is a fraudulent activity or clear misuse of these public funds. I expect local authorities to use this funding to support all care homes in their areas in taking steps to stop the spread of infection, and for money to continue to be passed on as quickly as possible to front-line providers.

I would like to thank you for all your work to date in supporting providers to access this crucial funding. We recognise the important and valuable role that local authority colleagues play in supporting people who need social care, not only during the current crisis but all year round.

HELEN WHATELY