



Helen Whately MP
Minister of State (Minister for
Care)
Department of Health and Social
Care
[CareandReform2@communities
.gov.uk](mailto:CareandReform2@communities.gov.uk)

Kim Wright
Chief Executive
London Borough of Lewisham
Laurence House
Catford
London SE6 4RU

020 8314 6235
kim.wright@lewisham.gov.uk

29th May 2020

Dear Minister of State for Care

I am writing in response to your letter dated 14th May 2020, in which you announced funding for Care Homes Support and requested an update on the support available to Care Homes in Lewisham from the Local Authority and partners in Health. COVID-19 has provided an unprecedented challenge to adult social care across the country. I do want to provide some brief London specific context however as the challenge has been significant here due to early and rapid spread of the virus, local patterns of deprivation, high levels of air pollution and the high proportion of ethnic minority populations in most London boroughs.

Across the Capital, London local authorities responded to the challenge and our responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act by working together as LondonADASS and Chief Executives, alongside NHS partners to identify issues, galvanise responses and lead several pan-London initiatives. We brought our co-ordinated response together through the Strategic Co-ordination Group and joint governance with NHS London.

Using data and evidence we developed a comprehensive understanding of the London adult social care markets (home care and care homes) during the spread of COVID-19. Our commissioners used this as a key part of their daily interaction to support providers. It has underpinned and strengthened relationships with providers locally and provided information on care homes across borough boundaries, which has streamlined the work and reduced the burden on providers. Since mid-March this has supported local operational responses: prioritising active delivery of PPE, ensuring appropriate staffing levels and providing Public Health infection control advice and support.

Being alert to emerging issues in system which led to care home challenges and our early response (we started reporting care home deaths and COVID cases from 23rd March) allowed action to be taken to respond in London and provided early warning nationally via the SCG of issues that would develop across the country. A summary of the work across London and issues for the future are captured in the attached **Appendix 1- London Region Appendix**.



Locally, Lewisham Council has continued to work closely with care home providers and members of Lewisham Health and Care Partners to put in place a responsive support offer to care homes which builds on existing good practice and strong relationships between providers, commissioners, and health and social care practitioners locally. Support, guidance and training has been provided to care homes around infection control, safe use of PPE and how to manage an outbreak. Homes have also been provided with support around access to PPE, Testing, workforce and Clinical support. Where there have been outbreaks, the Council's Public Health service have provided tailored guidance to care home management. Full details are provided in **Appendix 2 – Lewisham Support to Care Homes during Covid-19** and **Appendix 3 – Support for Care Homes Template Response**.

Ensuring the continuity of adult social care services to our most vulnerable residents is a key focus of Lewisham's Covid-19 response. Key Care Market intelligence such as care home availability, home care availability, residents with Covid-19 symptoms, confirmed Covid-19 cases and Covid-19 related deaths is reviewed daily to inform the local commissioning response. Where there are issues which affect the continuity of delivery of adult social care services for our most vulnerable residents, including care homes, this is escalated to the daily Covid-19 Gold Senior Management Meeting within the Council and in weekly Covid-19 committee meetings with partners.

Lewisham Council have offered payments supplementary to our 20/21 fee uplift in recognition of, and to support, the additional costs relating to Covid-19 to all of our social care providers including care homes. We have also offered, and will continue to offer, significant support in kind which is not included in any costs.

The current anticipated spend so far on adult social care in responding to Covid19 is in the region of £5.8m. At the time of writing, Lewisham Council expects to spend close to £23m on our overall response, along with an estimated loss of income from lost tax, fees and charges of £27m. This is in addition to the £16million of budget cuts we already needed to make in 2020/21 as a result of reductions in Central Government grants. So while the emergency funding from the Government is welcome, it will not cover all the costs associated with our response to this global pandemic and I urge an assurance from you that you will cover all of our related costs.

Our priorities for the next phase of support for care homes will be to:

- Continue to monitor care home data and local intelligence
- Provide support as required when there is an outbreak (including contact tracing when this is launched)
- Allocate the additional funding to Infection prevention and control and ensure it is spent to maximum effect
- Review Learning Disability and Mental Health Infection Prevention and Control policies and clinical support arrangements



- Establish regular meetings for care home managers and Public Health to respond to queries and issues raised by care home providers
- Develop the ongoing local training and support offer for Infection prevention and control
- Ensure there is sufficient capacity within the *whole* system locally to respond to any further surges in infection/potential for further lockdown measures to be reintroduced.

You will read in this letter just a snapshot of the hugely important work the Council has been doing, along with partners and the community, in managing the response to Covid19. Our wide range of responsibilities, from public health and social care, to refuse collection and keeping much needed parks open, from providing free parking for key workers and essential support to those people who are shielded, have all been central to ensuring that not only has the UK been able to manage the epidemic but that locally we have sustained critical services for our residents.

Yours sincerely

Kim Wright
Chief Executive
London Borough of Lewisham

Attachments:

Appendix 1 - London Region Appendix

Appendix 2 - Lewisham approach to Care Home Support during Covid-19

Appendix 3 – Support for Care Homes Template Response

Appendix 4 - Breakdown of financial support to care homes to date