

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	7 January 2021
Subject:	Infection Control Fund		
Report of:	Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Adult Social Care		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To seek approval of proposals relating to the utilisation of discretionary funding from the Department of Health & Social Care Infection Control Fund.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the report and;

- (1) Approve the proposals for the use of the discretionary 20% of the Infection Control Fund;
- (2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing, to make decisions on specific amounts from the discretionary element of the fund (and potentially any remaining funding from the initial 80% of the fund) to be allocated to each proposal, in accordance with the limits included in the Financial Procedure Rules; and
- (3) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing to allocate any funding from the discretionary element of the fund (and potentially any remaining funding from the initial 80% of the fund), in accordance with the limits included in the Financial Procedure Rules, to any subsequently identified proposals arising following further engagement with Providers and Stakeholders.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To agree initial proposals on the use of the remaining 20% of the Infection Control Fund and any amounts unallocated from the initial 80% of the fund.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

The following options were considered and rejected;

1. **Not utilising the 20% of the fund and also returning to DHSC and unallocated amounts from the initial 80% of the fund** – this option was considered and rejected as the full use of allocation Sefton has received from the national Infection Control Fund should be used to deal with issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and to support Providers and other sectors in order to then ensure that they can continue to safely deliver services to vulnerable people in Sefton.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no additional revenue costs associated with the proposals outlined in this report as the costs are being met from the Infection Control Fund received by the Council from the Department of Health & Social Care.

(B) Capital Costs

None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): No revenue implications for Sefton as this is a ringfenced grant.
Legal Implications: Coronavirus Act 2020 Care Act 2014
Equality Implications: The equality Implications have been identified and mitigated.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: By implementing the proposals, Providers will receive additional funding to deliver services, thus ensuring that these services continue to operate and provide valuable care and support services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

Commission, broker and provide core services: The proposals reflect wider Care Act obligations relating to supporting the entire Sefton care and support market and other services and not just those services commissioned by Sefton Council.
Place – leadership and influencer: The proposals represent an acknowledgement of the impact of COVID-19 on the whole care and support sector, and also not simply on just Sefton Council commissioned care and support services
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener:N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6206/20) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4398/20) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Consultation has taken place with key partners such as Public Health and the Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) around the proposals as part of a joint commitment to supporting Providers. Consultation has also taken place with Providers in order to further understand their cost pressures and areas in which they may require further financial support.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer:	Deborah Butcher
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 3329
Email Address:	Deborah.Butcher@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund was first introduced by the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) in May 2020 and was initially worth £600 million. The purpose of this 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 within and between care settings, in particular by helping to reduce the need for staff movements between sites
- 1.2 On the 1st October 2020 the DHSC announced an extension to the fund until March 2021 and a further £546m of national funding.
- 1.3 For Sefton the total allocation from the further funding is £4,260,125, which is paid to the Council in two instalments (on 1st October 2020 and in December 2020) with Sefton (as with all Local Authorities) required to allocate the funding based on the following;
 - 80% of each instalment to care homes within the Sefton geographical area on a 'per beds' basis and to CQC-regulated community care providers registered within the Sefton geographical area on a 'per user' basis, including to social care providers with whom Sefton does not have existing contracts; and
 - Sefton having discretion to use the remaining 20% of each instalment on other COVID-19 infection control measures, including providing support to other care settings, and wider workforce measures in relation to COVID-19 infection control.
- 1.4 In Sefton, the split of the total £4,260,125 funding is;
 - Care Homes = £2,506,549
 - Community Providers = £901,551
 - Remaining 20% = £852,025
- 1.5 There are Grant Conditions associated with the use of the fund which, in summary state that it must be used to support the following measures;

In respect of **Care Homes**:

- Ensuring that staff who are isolating in line with government guidance receive their normal wages while doing so. At the time of issuing the grant circular, this includes:
- Limiting all staff movement between settings unless absolutely necessary, to help reduce the spread of infection.
- limiting or cohorting staff to individual groups of residents or floors/wings, including segregation of COVID-19 positive residents
- To support active recruitment of additional staff (and volunteers) if they are needed to enable staff to work in only one care home or to work only with an assigned group of residents

- Steps to limit the use of public transport by members of staff (taking into account current government guidance on the safe use of other types of transport by members of staff)
- Providing accommodation for staff who proactively choose to stay separately from their families in order to limit social interaction outside work.
- Supporting safe visiting in care homes, such as dedicated staff to support and facilitate visits, additional IPC cleaning in between visits, and capital-based alterations to allow safe visiting such as altering a dedicated space
- Ensuring that staff who need to attend work for the purposes of being tested (or potentially in the future, vaccinated) for COVID-19 are paid their usual wages to do so

In respect of CQC-regulated **Community Care** Providers;

- Ensuring that staff who are isolating in line with government guidance receive their normal wages while doing so;
- Steps to limit the number of different people from a homecare agency visiting a particular individual or steps to enable staff to perform the duties of other team members/partner agencies (including, but not limited to, district nurses, physiotherapists or social workers) when visiting to avoid multiple visits to a particular individual
- Meeting additional costs associated with restricting workforce movement for infection control purposes.
- Ensuring that staff who need to attend work for the purposes of being tested (or potentially in the future, vaccinated) for COVID-19 are paid their usual wages to do so
- Steps to limit the use of public transport by members of staff

1.6 In order to receive the funding Providers must adhere to the Grant Conditions and firstly submit a signed declaration to the Council that they will adhere to the conditions and comply with the reporting requirements associated with the fund.

1.7 Sefton received the first instalment of the funding on 1st October 2020 and transferred the first instalment to providers within twenty working days, as per the Grant Conditions for the fund and subject to Providers being compliant with the Grant Conditions for Round 1 of the Infection Control Fund. The payment of the second instalment of the grant is contingent on Sefton:

- Having fully transferred the 80% 'per bed'/'per user' allocation of the first instalment to providers no longer than twenty working days after receipt of the funding; and
- and having returned templates specifying how providers (i) have spent funding in the first month, and (ii) are intending to use the rest of the funding at reporting point 1.

1.8 Sefton has met the above conditions and has made payments to those Providers that have submitted the required declaration. However, at this present time, not all Providers have submitted the declarations and this, coupled with the possibility that some Providers may state that they do not require the funding may mean that

there is remaining funding from the 80% allocation which could be 'added' to the remaining 20% and then allocated in line with the Grant Conditions.

1.9 However, at this stage this level of potential further available funding is not known as Providers are still being contacted regarding their use of the funding initially allocated to them. As at early December 2020, the payments made to date have been;

- **Care Homes** = £1,073,491 (payments to 92 of the 133 eligible Care Homes)
- **Community Providers** = £320,392 (payments to 21 of the 42 eligible Providers)
- **Total = £1,393,883** (from the £3,408,100 allocation, thereby resulting in £2,014,217 remaining to potentially be paid out)

1.10 In some instances, care homes have struggled to use the grant allocation, either within timeframes or within the prescriptive terms set out by set down by DHSC – in these instances where there may be hardship to a care home we will seek to negotiate flexible use of grant with the DHSC rather than return any unused funding to Central Government.

1.11 For the remaining 20% of the fund, the Grant Conditions stipulate that it must be used *“to support the sector to put in place other COVID-19 infection control measures, but this can be allocated at their discretion. This can include providing support on the infection prevention and control measures to a broader range of care settings (for instance, community and day support services) and other measures that the local authority could put in place to boost the resilience and supply of the adult social care workforce in their area to support effective infection control”*

1.12 As the remaining 20% of the fund is classed as discretionary funding, this report has been submitted to seek approval on the initial / high-level proposals for its use and to seek delegated authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing, to make decisions on specific amounts from the discretionary element of the fund to be allocated to each proposal and to allocate any funding to newly identified proposals arising following further engagement with Providers and Stakeholders.

2. Proposals on the use of the discretionary 20% of the Fund

2.1 It has been identified that in line with the Grant Conditions the remaining 20% of the fund could be used for the following;

- **Care Homes** – with respect to providing funding to support the national vaccination programme, such as to provide funding for care home staff travel costs to attend vaccination hubs (this may need to be subject to DHSC approval), and the implementation of Lateral Flow Testing (rapid COVID-19 tests) for scheduled visitor testing and increased resident and staff testing. In addition, the funding could also support the wider

aim of supporting safe visiting for care home residents. It has been identified that reduced visiting is having a detrimental impact on both care home residents and their families. In addition, engagement with Care Home Providers has identified that there will be additional staffing resources required to both conduct testing and facilitate safe visiting;

- **Day Centres** – support to facilitate safe re-opening of services and adherence to required Infection, Prevention and Control measures;
- **Infection Prevention and Control Team** – to secure additional staffing capacity within the team. During the COVID-19 pandemic the team have provided essential support to Providers, providing specialist advice, support and guidance to them on various issues. It has been identified that the team would benefit from additional staffing capacity as existing resources are stretched due to the impact of the pandemic on Providers, particularly care homes;
- **Shared Lives Carers** – funding to these services in order to ensure that this sector receives support as they are delivering services to vulnerable people in the community
- **Voluntary / Community / Faith (VCF) Sector** – funding to support this sector to adhere to Infection Prevention and Control requirements;
- **Community Providers** – further support in line with the primary aims of the fund; and
- **Personal Assistants and Informal Carers** – funding to support these groups to adhere to Infection Prevention and Control requirements, subject to engagement with Sefton Carers Centre.

2.2 As outlined in sections 1.8 to 1.10 of this report, definitive information on the amount of the 20% of the funding to be allocated to each of the above proposals cannot be provided at this present time and it may also be the case that further proposals are identified following further engagement with Providers and Stakeholders.