



ISLG

Independent Sector Liaison Group

Care Association Wakefield

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27th May 2020

Mr Andrew Balchin, Director of Adults, Communities and Health
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Dear Mr Balchin,

RE: Care Sector Resilience Plan

Further to the meeting of 26th May with the ISLG and Nichola Esmond (Service Manager – Joint Commissioning Adults' Health and Social Care) to discuss the continuation of the resilience plans that we have been jointly working on since the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic, the ISLG management committee held a subsequent meeting to work through some of the issues and concerns that different providers are currently facing and are fearful about for the future of the sector. We are confident that our collaborative working with WMDC will continue and hopefully, will appease some of these anxieties. However, we would like to raise some of these concerns for our future discussions and planning and specifically in relation to the current IC funding being made available imminently.

We want to take this opportunity in the first instance though, to pay tribute and thanks to Nichola for the relentless hard work and support that she has provided the care sector during this crisis. Many of us in the ISLG own care homes in other authorities and whilst we fully accept that each local authority works differently and will interpret guidance and deliver information in their own way, Nichola has taken a very open, transparent and inclusive approach to each of the many challenges that we have faced. WMDC have been at the forefront of each change and challenge and we have received information from Nichola and the team so efficiently that we have all been able to respond to challenges and problems, that care homes in other parts of the country have not been so quick to do the same; we feel that this fact has helped our area to keep cases and deaths lower than they could have been and certainly, lower than in other parts of the country and in neighbouring authorities.

We remain grateful for the swift response to support care homes financially by way of the additional funding provided for block purchased beds, payments for additional PPE costs and the provision of emergency PPE and latterly the provision of void payments. Some providers have also received practical assistance - in a very timely manner - with staffing issues after contracting Covid19 in the home and losing a number of duty staff to isolation. All of this was easily achieved due to the daily Survey, that was implemented very early on in the crisis, to supply your team with information to allow them to act quickly and so prevent a catastrophe for the care sector. Additionally, by Nichola consulting with us to determine the best way forward with each challenge, has undoubtedly firmed up the growing and mutual respect between the ISLG/providers and the local authority.

The weekly conference calls; which Nichola commenced very early on in the pandemic, has brought many professionals together to work through contingency plans and facilitated a strategic group approach and understanding to each area of potential problems and again, provided swift solutions to the many problems that each health & social care partner faces. As a result, we have been able, in the most part, to support one another effectively.

The proposed imminent funding; whilst helpful, will only have a short-term supportive impact on the sector. This funding will go some way to assist care providers financially to provide much needed additional Infection Control training, bridge the gap between normal and increased spends on PPE and IC products such as additional cleaning and infection prevention products; steam

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cleaning and sanitisation equipment/products, additional costs for staffing, uniforms, linen, bathroom products. But what of the costs already incurred to protect both our vulnerable clients and our devoted staff? These increases have already had a significant detrimental financial affect. A quick calculation of the ongoing costs has identified that the funding will support, but will most certainly not cover, the additional expenditure that will be incurred to prevent the spread of the virus and protect our vulnerable elderly residents and the staff tasked to ensure this.

Four Seasons Health Care released their additional PPE/IC cost figures today; from £200,000 to £2.5m from the beginning of March to the end of April. This will naturally compare relatively to all providers.

Moving forward, we see far more serious issues; but which may be addressed with existing budget plans. Occupancy nationwide has seen a significant decline; this will undoubtedly result in the closure of some care homes and in the very least, will push others to the 'cliff edge' if we do not act and have a plan in place; Insurance companies have already started to increase premiums in anticipation of the wave of claims expected to be made by family members of loved ones in care homes; nursing homes have received little or no financial support and they care for the most vulnerable high dependency residents; who generally have the lowest immunity, and the financial burden is added to with the well reported higher nursing staff costs; domiciliary care providers appear not to be receiving the same level of financial support as care homes. We hope that the 25% (after 75% pay out to care homes) can be allocated to nursing homes and domiciliary care providers.


Local authorities can reduce this impact and possibly prevent home closures and sustain the market; budgets were set prior to the outbreak and these budgets were set and agreed based on a projected occupancy. Indeed, the authority collates occupancy information on a regular basis and can therefore assure itself of some accuracy in this regard. We therefore propose that based on the numbers assessed, the WMDC continues to make void payments at the projected occupancy levels and at the reduced rate (75% of contracted fee rate per bed) until such time that occupancy reaches its normal level or we reach the next consultation period; whichever arrives first. This way, whilst the occupancy is lower than expected the WMDC are saving 25% of its budgeted £ amount whilst ensuring the stability of the market by doing so.

Please be assured that we wish to continue to work with adult services to support both the authority and the sector to continue to provide a high level of care for the most vulnerable in our society and we feel that the current collaborative working ethos will ensure a positive success rate for the WMDC and care providers, but most importantly of all, for those who require social care support in the district.

The ISLG have put together an evidence summary spreadsheet of the expected IC expenditure; which we will happily share with WMDC for the purpose of submission to the DHSC if this is deemed appropriate and helpful.

In the meantime, we wish to thank the WMDC; specifically, Nichola Esmond and her team for the exceptional support providers have received during these very difficult and worrying times. We look forward to continuing the good work and progress we are making.

Yours sincerely



Gaynor Saunders
(ISLG – Chair)

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