



Dear James,

Thank for your letter of 29 May about the Infection Control Fund (ICF).

Given the evidence of the prevalence of asymptomatic transmission, Public Health England strongly recommends that care homes do all they can to restrict staff movement wherever feasible. Taking this recommendation into account and including feedback from care providers that they were not supported with the extra workforce costs relating to infection control, the Government introduced this Fund. That is why the specific purpose of this fund is to support the implementation of a new set of measures, identified in the Care Home Support Package published alongside the fund. This includes measures such as ensuring, as far as possible, that members of staff work in only one care home, and helping to limit their use of public transport – steps that we believe not all providers would ordinarily be taking without specific support from central government.¹

The Government has already provided local government with £3.2bn of unringfenced additional funding to help deal with the pandemic and has committed to keeping future funding under review.

In your letter you refer to the conditions and reporting associated with the fund. We recognise that this does represent a more challenging requirement than the unringfenced funding previously provided to local government. We consulted with stakeholders prior to publishing the Grant Circular and we consider that it is reasonable and necessary to ensure we have a clear understanding of how public money has been spent.

We particularly understand increased demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) will have placed financial pressure on many providers and we are doing everything we can to give the social care sector the equipment and support they need. We are supporting the existing supplier network by providing stock of PPE to designated wholesalers for onward sale to social care providers. All wholesalers have confirmed that they are not applying a mark-up for PPE in excess of their BAU mark up. Additionally, until 31 July a zero-rate of VAT will apply to sales of PPE for COVID-19. As of 29th May, we have released 127 million items of PPE to designated wholesalers for onward sale to social care providers.

Providers that are unable to obtain PPE through their usual or dedicated wholesalers can approach their Local Resilience Forum (LRF) or, if this route is unsuccessful, the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR) system. We are also developing an online PPE Portal to enable primary, social and community care providers to request critical PPE. The

¹ We are aware that some local authorities and providers were already taking one or more of the measures identified in the grant conditions prior to announcement of the fund: we are grateful for this and it is possible to use the ICF for the continuation of these measures.

portal will act as an emergency top-up route if the BAU or designated wholesaler routes have been unsuccessful. PPE distributed through these three routes is provided free of charge.

We continue to be grateful to stakeholders across the sector who have provided evidence of the costs being faced and recognise that COVID-19 has imposed new financial pressures across local government. These are important to improving our understanding of pressures being faced and the rate at which money is reaching the frontline. We will continue to work with you and other key stakeholders to understand future funding requirements.

Finally, I would like to join you in recognising the important role that local authorities play in supporting older and disabled people, not only during the current crisis but all year round.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Whately', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

HELEN WHATELY