

Operational FAQs for Staffordshire's home care providers during the COVID-19 pandemic

Version 1.2 dated 16 April 2020

These FAQs are aimed at home care providers who are supporting adults whose care is commissioned by Staffordshire County Council

How should providers alert the Council of capacity to take-on new home care packages?

Please send an email each Monday morning to homecarecapacity@staffordshire.gov.uk alerting the Council to any available capacity to accept new care packages. Feel free to also email updates as and when capacity becomes available, but a weekly Monday morning email will help avoid the information becoming out of date.

When emailing, please include the relevant postcode areas where you have capacity - the first five digits would be great, e.g. ST16 2**, or as best you can if that level of detail is unavailable. Also include the approximate weekly hours of available capacity and whether it is for double or single runs only.

How should a provider escalate their concern about being unable to deliver care safely?

Providers should escalate any such concern by email to ascincidentmanagement@staffordshire.gov.uk or by telephone to 0300 111 8050. However, before doing this, the provider must first ensure they have fully exhausted their Business Continuity Plan and explored opportunities for mutual support and cooperation between providers. The Council will not be in a position to accept any hand back requests during this period.

How will the Council help the cashflow of home care providers?

Please see Dr Richard Harling's [letter dated 24 March](#) 2020 which gives an overview of measures the Council is taking to support homecare providers, including revised payment arrangements which will apply for a twelve week period from 29 March 2020. The key changes are around:

Basis of payment: The Council will pay home care providers on commissioned hours, instead of actual hours delivered, for each package of care commissioned by the Council.

Where care is suspended / ended:

The Council will pay providers seven days beyond the date when the delivery of care is either:

- suspended due to the service user's hospitalisation;
- ended due to the service user's death;
- ended due to the service user's refusal of care in order to self-isolate.

Where care is suspended due to hospitalisation the Council will, as now, look to the provider to resume care within a seven-day period. More than ever, we must make every effort keep the pressure off our hospitals.

Where care is refused by the service user in order to self-isolate, the Council will not obligate the provider to resume care. Please refer to the Council's [information for care providers webpage](#) for steps providers must take when care is refused, starting with phoning Staffordshire Cares on 0300 111 8010. If the adult has capacity then the social work team will have a discussion with them about the implications of this decision, establishing how they will manage their care needs.

Where care is still refused and the delivery of care ends, and subsequently the service user wants to resume care, then wherever practicable and to promote continuity the Council may first offer the package back to the previous provider. However, the previous provider will be under no obligation to accept the package back. It will be explained to the service user that a refusal of care may result in a resumption with a different provider and that there may be a delay whilst the package of care is re-brokered.

Flexing care up or down: Home care providers will be afforded discretion to flex the care delivered to each service user up or down by up to +/- 25% of the weekly commissioned hours, using their professional judgement and without needing to seek prior approval from the Council. Providers are required to record any decisions they have taken, with evidence of the rationale used and will be required to share these records with the Council if requested.

There will be no financial penalty or reduction in payment for any decrease of care, up to 25%, so long as service users who are commissioned by the Council remain safe and appropriately cared for.

We would expect providers to be prudent when applying discretion to flex upwards, not least where that consumes care worker capacity which might otherwise be used to pick-up new packages of care to people in greater need. We would not ordinarily expect a provider to flex care upwards to a service user for whom they have RAG rated as 'green'.

If it becomes necessary to flex care up or down by more than 25% then providers should first contact Staffordshire Care on 0300 111 8010 who will refer the matter to the relevant social work team.

Payments to Contracted Providers:

- **Logging visits:** From the morning of Sunday 29 March 2020, providers will no longer be required to log visits to CM2000. That is, the last day of logging visits should be at the end of Saturday 28 March 2020.
- **Payment in arrears:** The Council will continue to make weekly payments to contracted providers, two weeks in arrears. The first week to be based on commissioned hours (i.e. for the week beginning Sunday 29 March

2020) will be paid on 15 April 2020 and should hit bank accounts on Friday 17 April 2020.

- **How will payments be transacted:** The Council will continue to pay contracted providers via BACs. There is no need for contracted providers to start sending invoices where they did not previously send invoices.
- **How will payments be calculated:** The Council will base payments on CareDirector records for the commissioned hours of each service user, taking account of the hourly rate for relevant contract zone. We are working at pace to review the accuracy of these records. As a one-off exercise to check accuracy, the Council may send a list of service users to providers. This may be done alongside a wider exercise to map what RAG risk rating the provider has allocated each service users under their Business Continuity Plan (see the section below).
- **Will the Council reconcile payments:** The Council will not subsequently reconcile payments to reflect the actual hours delivered, where this is a temporary under-delivery of care within the provider's discretion to flex care down by -25%.
The Council will reconcile payments to take account of new packages starting and for existing packages ending, where these were not accounted for at the time payment was made for the week in question.
- **Pre-purchase rotas:** Where a provider is currently paid by invoice to deliver a PPR, the provider should continue to submit invoices to the Council.
- **Where a provider is contracted but not paid via CM2000:** Where a provider is currently paid by invoice, the provider should continue to submit invoices to the Council. This includes providers who have recently become contracted under the 'Unmet Needs Framework' but have yet to be setup on CM2000.
- **What if I use CM2000 for my rostering and/or calculating staff payments?** The Council does not keep records of which providers use CM2000 for rostering/paying staff, this being an arrangement directly between the provider and CM (HAS Technology Ltd).

However, please note the Council is not 'switching off' CM2000. We're simply no longer obligating providers to use it to log visits during the upcoming weeks, recognising that the Council will not be using it to calculation or reconcile payments. To that end, if using CM2000 to log visits is critical to your system for rostering/paying staff, then there's nothing stopping you to keep using it. If this means continuing to log visits remotely, you might want to take additional steps around good hand hygiene when using service users' landline telephones to log visits.

If in any doubt, please discuss the matter with CM (HAS Technology Ltd).

Payments to Non-contracted Providers:

- **How will payments be transacted:** Non-contracted providers should continue to submit invoices to the Council. Invoices should reflect commissioned hours, plus any claims for payment for seven days beyond care being ended / suspended.
- **Payment terms:** The Council has reduced its payment terms for paying invoices from home care providers' to within seven days.
- **Claiming payment for over-delivery:** Please do not include claims for payments on invoices when flexing-up the care delivered. There is a risk of invoices being rejected for being above commissioned hours. See the section below on how to claim payments for over-delivery of care.
- **If unable to send invoices:** If for whatever reason a provider is unable to continue submitting invoices, then please contact the Council on ascincidentmanagement@staffordshire.gov.uk and we will make a calculation in order to make an emergency payment.

How do providers claim payment for the over-delivery of care?

The Council will accept claims for over-delivery of care to a service user, for additional contact time of up-to a maximum of 25% above the weekly commissioned hours. This applies only to service users for whom the Council has commissioned their care.

Details on the process claiming payment will follow. This will be based on providers submitting a simple claim form every four weeks with details of: service users' initials, references and postcodes, the additional contact hours delivered per week, and the reason why over-delivery was needed. Please ensure you are keeping good records to allow the claim form to be populated.

This process applies to both contracted and non-contracted providers. Non-contracted providers should not add these additional amounts to their regular invoices, as this will risk normal invoice payments being rejected as being above the commissioned hours.

What actions should a provider take if a person who is in receipt of care has been advised to self-isolate and refuses or does not understand the risk?

If an adult in receipt of care is advised to self isolate and refuses, the care provider will need to inform adult social care of this refusal by contacting Staffordshire Cares on [0300 111 8010](tel:03001118010).

If the adult lacks capacity a discussion must be had with the advocate or identified family member to explain the risks etc. and then to consider the care continuing in the adult's best interest. This will be the responsibility of the relevant area duty team who can be contacted via Staffordshire Cares [0300 111 8010](tel:03001118010). This discussion and decision will need to be recorded on Care Director system.

Will the Council still apply quality and performance measures?

The Council has suspended its normal arrangements for quality visits, contract review meetings and measuring key performance indicators. We ask providers to continue monitoring and managing the volume and quality of care provided using your own systems, and to focus on ensuring service users are safe and appropriately care for.

How are providers to be kept informed by the Council?

Please visit and keep revisiting the Council's [information for care providers webpage](#). This is where updates from the Council will get published.

How should providers keep the Council informed:

Please telephone Staffordshire Cares on 0300 111 8010 to notify social work teams where:

- a service user is refusing care
- care needs to increase / decrease by more than +/- 25% of the service users weekly commissioned hours

Please email homecarecapacity@staffordshire.gov.uk to notify the Council of:

- capacity to take-on new care packages in an area

Please email ascincidentmanagement@staffordshire.gov.uk or telephone 0300 111 8050 to notify:

- concern that care can no longer be safely delivered
- any other queries in relation to the COVID-19