



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/07702/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

10 November 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 October concerning Petition P-05-1041- Funding for Hospitals and Care homes for virtual visiting in lockdown.

In relation to funding generally, as an immediate response to Covid-19 we made available to local authorities up to £40 million to enable them to assist adult social care providers with the additional day-to-day costs they were experiencing. This was made available to authorities through the local government hardship fund and was to assist care homes and others with the extra costs from the pandemic. These costs were predominantly in areas such as greater infection control and additional staffing, but funding could also be used to assist care homes in purchasing additional ICT to facilitate contact between residents and their families where visits to homes were unable to take place. This funding was originally for April and May, although we subsequently extended this period to include June. Since then we have provided local authorities with further funding of £22.7 million to continue to assist providers with these costs over a longer period until the end of September.

While this provided much needed support to the sector many providers still face financial pressures and will do for some time to come. As a result the additional £264 million we recently announced for local authorities for Covid-19 related costs for the remainder of 2020-2021 includes funding for local authorities to assist adult social care providers for that period. This further funding will enable local authorities to continue to assist care providers during the coming winter and beyond with their on-going additional costs in social care as a result of the pandemic.

With regards to supporting people to stay in contact with their friends and families, I appreciate this continues to be an extremely difficult time for people living in care homes and their loved ones, who have faced restrictions on visiting each other during the pandemic. Where visits in person are restricted we expect care home providers to make every effort to support people to stay in touch with their friends and family in other ways.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I am aware of the thoughtful and creative ways that many care home staff have helped people feel connected during this time, such as through sharing photographs, cards, messages and newsletters. Some have been particularly pro-active by using social media and video calls to enable people and their families to engage in quizzes and other activities.

We have supported care homes in this endeavour by providing additional funding to our *Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being (DCW)* procured programme to purchase and distribute over 1000 digital devices (tablets) to care homes across Wales. Care Home staff were also provided with training and support to use them. I understand that some people, particularly those with dementia, may have difficulty holding a phone or using a tablet. We have commissioned an evaluation of this additional support provided by DCW which should highlight where reasonable adaptations could be made in this area, such as using a larger screen or headsets, for example.

We are continuing to work with our sector stakeholder group and are keeping our approach to visits under review. In particular we are exploring how we can further support care home providers to enable visits safely.

Supporting the well-being of care home residents is one of six core themes in our Care Homes Action Plan. As part of this plan we are working with our key partners to speak directly with people who live in care homes to ask them about their experience during the pandemic and what would support them over the winter. A Written Statement with an update on the Care Homes Action Plan was published on 7 October:

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-care-homes-action-plan-update>

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services