

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 19 January 2022

Update from Covid Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- a. Note the update from the Covid Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board.
- b. Approve extension of the contract with Nexxus Trading Services Ltd until 31 March 2022 to provide Targeted Community Testing in line with the Government's requirement to sustain and extend this programme.
- c. Approve proposals for expenditure of the Workforce Recruitment & Retention Round 2 and Infection Control Fund further round grants to care providers.

Current Situation

Introduction

1. With the Omicron variant spreading fast, Covid infections in Staffordshire are at very high levels, with cases in all age groups. This is causing substantial pressure on health and care services due to Covid related hospitalisations on top of usual seasonal illness, as well as staff absences on top of long term recruitment and retention difficulties.

Covid vaccination

2. Vaccination is the best way to reduce complications and deaths from Covid and is even more important in the face of the Omicron variant. The intention nationally is to offer all adults a booster as well as children over 12 two doses by the end of January 2022. The Council will continue to support the NHS to accelerate the vaccination programme.

Targeted Community Testing

3. The Targeted Community Testing programme (TCT) offers testing with lateral flow devices to check for Covid. People are advised to test regularly and especially before contact with vulnerable people and before

visiting busy indoor settings. Local authorities are responsible for arranging TCT in their area. The Department of Health and Social Care provides a Community Testing Grant to fund Targeted Community Testing.

4. Government has announced a 3-month extension of TCT until 31 March 2022 to support the test, trace, isolate and vaccinate approach required under their Winter 'Plan B' and policy changes in response to the Omicron variant, which include testing of cases to allow early release from isolation, as well as daily testing of some close contacts.
5. In Staffordshire TCT has been provided by Nexxus Trading Services Ltd (Nexxus). So far 1.2m lateral flow device tests have been provided, focused on those communities most affected by Covid. The approach includes supervised testing as well as distribution of home test kits. Total contract expenditure to date is £3.1m.
6. Nexxus have the experience, skills, and infrastructure to be able to continue to provide TCT effectively. The recommendation therefore is to extend the contract with Nexxus until 31st March 2022. The expectation is that this would provide a further 250,000 lateral flow device tests with an additional contract expenditure of £0.3m, funded by the Community Testing Grant.
7. There are no significant legal implications in respect of extending the contract with Nexxus. Nexxus is the Council's local authority trading company and therefore, if the relevant conditions are met, the Council can award a contract to Nexxus without a competitive procurement process as it falls outside the scope of the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The Council will ensure that the extension is appropriately documented.

Grants to care providers

8. Care providers have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic and have faced challenges to maintain enhanced standards of infection prevention and control, test clients and staff, and in recent months to recruit and retain their workforce. Government has provided a series of one-off grants to support care providers, which have been distributed via local authorities. The allocations received by Staffordshire County Council are shown in Table 1. These have been distributed to care providers in line with grant conditions.
9. On 17th and 29th December the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced two further grants. DHSC has asked local authorities to use both grants as quickly as possible. Funding can be given to

providers to support their own initiatives or spent by local authorities on schemes to help all providers. Both grants must be used by 31/03/22, with any unused funds returned to DHSC.

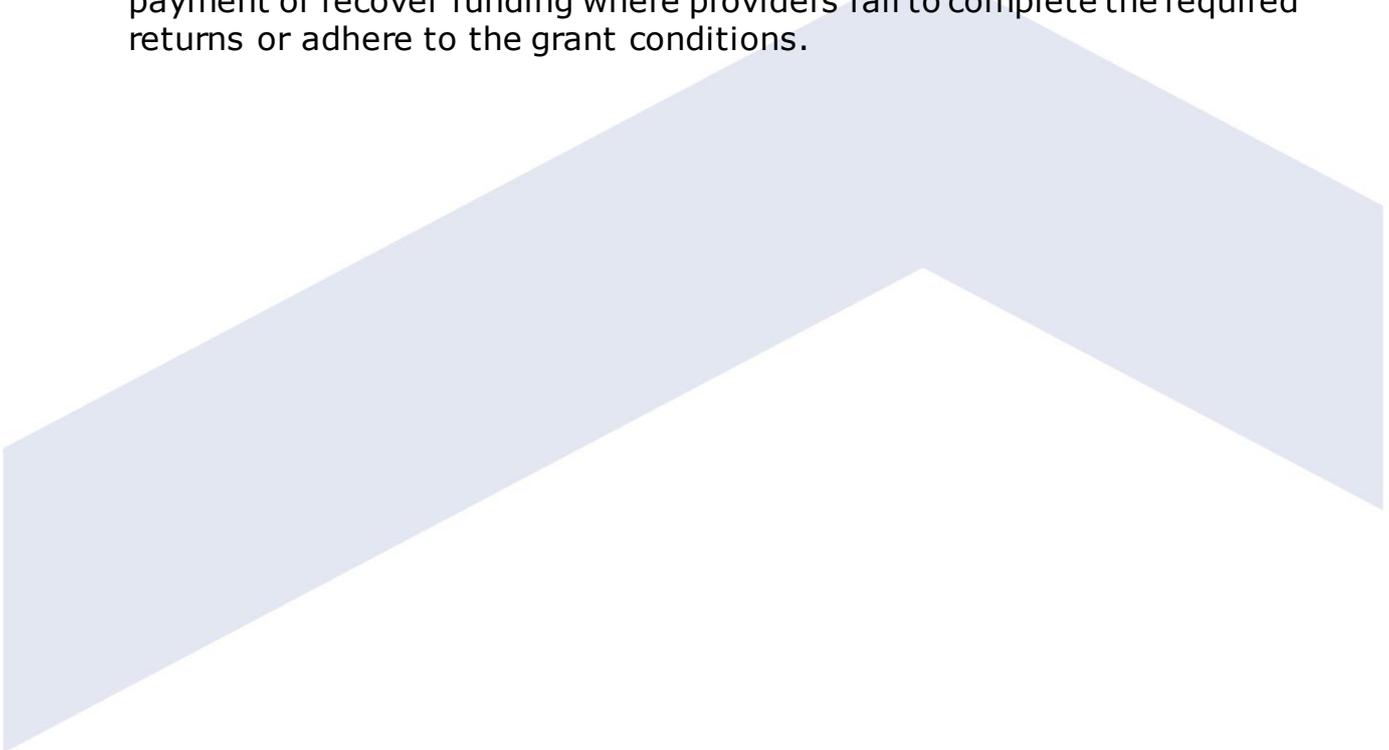
- a. **Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund Round 2.** The Council will receive a total of £4,427,456 in two instalments in January 2022 and February 2022. The funding is contingent on submitting an assurance statement to DHSC by 21 January 2022. The purpose of the grant is to recruit and retain sufficient staff over winter, and support growth and sustain existing workforce capacity.
 - b. **Infection and Prevention Control Fund further round.** Details have not yet been published by DHSC. Funding totals £60m in England with Staffordshire's allocation expected to be c£900k. Grant conditions are expected to be similar to previous rounds of funding.
10. Proposals for the expenditure of these grants are shown in Tables 2 and 3. These are consistent with grant conditions and are a combination of funding to providers and schemes delivered by the Council. The proposals are largely an extension of allocations under the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund Round 1 and Infection and Prevention Control Fund previous rounds.
11. The Council will require applications from care providers in order to give assurance that funding will be used in line with grant conditions, and that funding will reach frontline staff. Legal advice is being sought as to whether new applications are required or whether the applications and agreements received for Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund Round 1 and previous rounds of Infection and Prevention Control Fund are sufficient. The Council will ensure that steps are taken to withhold payment or recover funding where providers fail to complete the required returns or adhere to the grant conditions.
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Table 1: previous Government grants disseminated to care providers

Name of Grant	Date	Allocation (£m)	Conditions
ASC Infection Control Fund 1	May-20	9.916	To fund infection prevention and control practices and increase uptake of staff vaccination.
ASC Infection Control Fund 2	Nov-20	8.274	
ASC Infection Control Fund 3	Apr-21	3.117	
ASC Infection Control Fund 4	Jul-21	2.229	
ASC Infection Control Fund 5	Oct-21	3.733	
Adult Social Care Lateral Flow Device Testing in care homes	Jan 21	2.463	To fund rapid testing of clients, staff and visitors in care homes, high-risk supported living and extra care settings.
Adult Social Care Lateral Flow Device Testing in care homes	Apr 21	2.039	
Adult Social Care Lateral Flow Device Testing in care homes	Jul-21	1.674	
Adult Social Care Lateral Flow Device Testing in care homes	Oct-21	1.954	
Workforce Capacity	Jan-21	1.771	To fund additional staff.
Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund Round 1	Jan-21	2.398	To recruit and retain sufficient staff over winter, and support growth and sustain existing workforce capacity.
Vaccine Funding	Oct-21	0.359	To fund support for staff to access Covid and flu vaccinations.
Total		39.927	

Table 2: proposals for expenditure of the Workforce Recruitment & Retention Round 2

Providers/Scheme	Proposed expenditure (£)
Funding to all care providers	
Annual Leave buy back schemes, support for child-care costs, staff incentives for retention and low sick leave, overtime payments for bank holiday days	2,750,000
Total funding to care providers	2,750,000
Council schemes	
Increase maximum length of stay in interim respite beds to 6 weeks to ensure sufficient capacity for hospital discharge if home care is not available.	111,000
Funding for home care providers to support recruitment and retention during February and March to maintain capacity during Q1/2 2022.	750,000
Develop bed based reablement to support people being discharged from hospital.	300,000
Additional capacity to support home care commissioning.	57,171
Increase hourly rate for Nexxus reablement to enable the company to match MPFT Home First terms and conditions and support recruitment of additional staff.	100,000
Voluntary and community sector support for people, in particular safe and well checks for people discharged from hospital.	270,000
Induction and training for care reservists to enable them to be deployed as emergency staff to care providers.	45,000
Administration costs at 1%.	£44,275
Total funding for Council schemes	1,677,456
Overall total	4,427,456

Table 3: proposals for expenditure of the Infection Control Fund further round

Providers/Scheme	Proposed expenditure (£)
Non-discretionary funding to care providers	
Care homes and drug and alcohol services	£513,000
Home care and other community care providers	£126,000
Total non-discretionary funding to care providers	£639,000
Discretionary funding to care providers and Council schemes	
Shared lives	£3,566
Communicator Guide	£463
Advocacy Services	£3,000
In-house day care services	£6,000
Contracted day care services	£7,000
Non-contracted day care services	£53,000
Carers respite services	£6,814
Support for outbreak management for all care providers settings – e.g. agency staff	£25,000
Support for infection prevention and control for people with dementia and other complex needs	£25,000
Additional winter schemes (e.g. rotas to provide additional home care capacity and voluntary sector services to support hospital discharge.)	£120,000
Administration costs at 1%	£9,000
Total discretionary funding to care providers and Council schemes	258,843
Overall total	£897,843