

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 15 December 2021

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. Note the HM Government grants already disseminated to care providers.
- c. Endorse dissemination of the Workforce Recruitment & Retention Fund to care providers.

Introduction

1. The number of new cases of Covid in Staffordshire remains high, and slightly below the England average. Cases are particularly high among school age children and are continuing to cause significant disruption to education. The Council continues to work with schools and other settings to prevent and control outbreaks.

Omicron

2. The last month has seen the emergence of the Omicron variant of the virus. This is of concern because it shows significant mutations and there is the possibility it may escape the immunity conferred either by prior infection or vaccination. Further data is required before we can be confident about the level of the threat posed by the Omicron variant. In the meantime, HM Government has introduced new restrictions including a requirement for PCR testing for returning travellers, a legal requirement for isolation of contacts of cases of the Omicron variant, and face coverings in shops as well as communal areas in schools.

Covid Vaccination

3. 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.

Care providers

4. 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. HM 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 disseminated to care providers in line with grant conditions.

Table 1: HM Government grants to support care providers in Staffordshire

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	1.945	
Workforce Capacity	Jan-21	1.771	To fund additional staff.
Vaccine Funding	Oct-21	0.359	To fund support for staff to access Covid and flu vaccinations.
Total		37.520	

5. In light of growing challenges nationally with recruitment and retention of care staff HM Government has now provided a Workforce Recruitment & Retention Grant to fund measures to recruit and retain care staff in order to:

- a. Support care providers to maintain safe care and bolster capacity to deliver more care.
- b. Support timely and safe discharge from hospital to ongoing care where required.
- c. Support care providers to prevent admission to hospital
- d. Enable timely new care in community.

6. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has asked local authorities to disseminate the Grant as quickly as possible. The grant must be spent by 31 March 2022 or any unused funds must be returned.
7. The Workforce Recruitment & Retention Grant allocation for Staffordshire is £2.398m. In its role as Covid Gold Command the Council's corporate senior leadership team has agreed proposals to disseminate the Grant to care providers to fund schemes including:
 - a. Annual leave buy-back.
 - b. Zero sickness monthly bonus.
 - c. Bonus for working unsociable hours/bank holidays over winter.
 - d. New starter incentive schemes.
 - e. Additional recruitment costs.
 - f. Overtime.
8. In Staffordshire the NHS has already provided £2.8m to support recruitment and retention in home care, and this funding is currently being disseminated to home care providers. A larger proportion of the Workforce Recruitment & Retention Grant will therefore be used to support care homes, Supported Living and Extra Care providers who have not benefited from the NHS funding.
9. Care providers will be required to apply for Workforce Recruitment & Retention Grant clearly identifying how the funding will be used and how it will contribute to the outcomes listed in paragraph 6. Care providers who apply for the Grant will be required to sign an agreement and complete returns detailing expenditure and outcomes so that the Council can submit returns to DHSC.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

[Staffordshire Covid Local Outbreak Management Plan](#)

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