

Scotland Excel

To: CEOMG

On: 6th May 2020

**Report
by
Chief Executive of Scotland Excel**

**Heading:
Covid-19 - Social Care Category Update**

1. Summary

- 1.1 The current Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of public services, and it is predicted that this disruption will continue for some time. Over the past year or so the cost profile of social care services has continued to rise, and the current crisis will compound this even further. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the CEOMG regarding the current landscape of collaborative social care services, and to outline current risks and potential mitigation opportunities.

2. Background

- 2.1 All of Scotland Excel's social care frameworks are being affected by the coronavirus pandemic, most noticeably in areas such as staff-shortages due to self-isolation and sickness, challenges around sourcing PPE and keeping vulnerable people safe and well in such challenging circumstances.

Scotland Excel is a member of the National Covid-19 Contingency Planning Group for care services, working with key partners to share information and guidance across the public sector.

In a further move to help tackle the crisis, Scotland Excel is currently offering free, temporary associate membership to any public or third sector organisation, which would give them access to 74 frameworks including Social Care Agency Workers and Technology Enabled Care, PPE, Food and Janitorial Products.

The Scottish Government and COSLA have announced that social care staff are to receive a 3.3% pay rise backdated to 1st April. This offer was made following consultation with Scotland Excel regarding the market analysis carried out on Care & Support Services, and from the cost model for the National Care Home Contract.

This national uplift does not apply to:

- Children and young people's services;
- Previously agreed multiyear frameworks which already have an uplift factored in for living wage;
- Local Block contracts arrangements;
- Scotland Excel Care and Support Flexible Framework, awarded on 1st April 2020, where the uplift for living wage has been included;
- Any Residential care, the National Care Home Contract and Scotland Excel Care Homes for Adults with Learning Disabilities Framework awarded in October 2019;
- Local Authority staff where the Scottish Joint Council agreement is in place.

Scotland Excel has worked in collaboration with COSLA towards the development of the Guidance for Commissioning Services COVID-19, published in April 2020, which sets out how the uplift is applied and is available from the COSLA website area for Councils.

3. Adult Social Care

3.1 Care and Support Services

The first national Flexible Care and Support Services framework went live on 1st April with 78 providers offering 316 services. While Scotland Excel recognises that current pressures on both the local authority and care sector workforce mean adoption of this framework is expected to be delayed, it is worth noting key attributes for when the time is right.

The framework was developed over three years in consultation with the Scottish Government, councils, care providers and a range of bodies to provide councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) with a national approach to commissioning care at home and supported living services.

It reflects the Scottish Government's updated Health and Social Care Standards and is intended to help people who need services to live safely and independently in their own homes and communities. The framework will re-open every six months over its four-year duration to allow new providers to join.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, initial preparatory mobilisation work had taken place with the participating authorities to adopt the framework at a local level. The initial work prioritised support for mobilisation with early adopters, including Dundee, Stirling, Clackmannanshire, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire. Scotland Excel is keen to re-establish this work while ensuring that unnecessary pressures are not placed upon HSCP's and service providers, particularly at the moment when there is local financial and emergency care planning underway to ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities continue to receive the appropriate care and support.

Recognition of the current local authority position, coupled with feedback from Social Work Scotland Contracts Group, will help us better determine the next steps in the mobilisation process in the coming weeks.

3.2 National Care Home Contract

Over the past three years, Scotland Excel has worked with local authorities, COSLA and Scottish Care to develop a cost model to produce national rates for council funded places in nursing and residential care homes.

Although work is not yet complete on the 2020/21 model, negotiations around direct care costs were expedited so that care homes could meet the cost of annual increases in wages and salaries, property and supplies with effect from 6th April. This ensures that care workers and nursing staff looking after vulnerable older people during the Covid-19 crisis are put on a much surer financial footing.

The rates agreed for 2020/21, which include increases for paying the Real Living Wage to all care workers and paying nursing staff at the top of the Agenda for Change Band 5, are:

- £740.00 per person per week for nursing care
- £635.79 per person per week for residential care

Councils will now be in receipt of all necessary paperwork to enter into local contracts with providers for each care home in their area. Care providers have been advised that there may be a short delay in changing to the 2020/21 rates

while both local authority and provider finance systems are updated. In such circumstances, councils are being advised to backdate payments to 6th April.

4. Children's Services

4.1 Children's Residential Care & Education including Short Breaks

This flexible framework supports councils to make placements within independent children's residential care, care and education, residential short breaks and day education services. There are currently 43 providers on the framework with negotiations for fee uplifts for 2020/21 nearing completion.

Uplift requests were submitted by 29 providers with a potential impact of an increase in cost of c.£4m. This was subsequently reduced by 25% through negotiations with providers.

A further 14 providers applied to join the framework when it re-opened earlier this year and it is anticipated that details of successful tenders will be released by 30th June.

4.2 Secure Care Services

Four specialist, independent secure care centres provide services to local authorities and the Scottish Government via Scotland Excel contracts. During the Covid-19 pandemic they report to the Scottish Government COVID-19 Secure Care Resilience Group on a weekly basis. This group comprises senior representatives from each centre along with relevant senior staff from Scottish Government, Scotland Excel, the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland.

All secure care centres have robust service continuity and contingency plans in place, and these are updated when new information and guidance becomes available. In addition to weekly Resilience Group meetings, secure care centres are subject to the Care Inspectorate's revised national notification requirements for the Covid-19 emergency including:

- Incidents of outbreaks of infectious disease notifications.
- Staffing shortage notifications.
- Weekly staffing absence notification

5. **Other Social Care Contracts**

5.1 Community Meals

The Community Meals framework provides an efficient means for local authorities to arrange delivery of pre-prepared meals to people in their homes, as well as to community venues and council premises.

Benefits include:

- Reduced procurement costs plus savings
- Access to appropriate alternative service delivery models
- Standard and appropriate terms & conditions

The framework offers a range of services, which includes Bulk Delivery to a Central Distribution Point; Frozen Delivery Service to Customers at Home / Nominated Premises; Daily Delivery of Hot Meals to Customers at Home / Nominated Premises.

Both providers to this framework report that they have contingency plans in place to ensure continuity of supply to this vulnerable customer base.

The dominant supplier on this framework has reported an increase in volumes purchased from some of their key customers. Typical reasons for this include staff shortages within local authority care homes, sickness cover, and lack of staff working within this sector. They continue to supply to their elderly and vulnerable customer base across hospitals, care homes and into people's homes. However, day care and lunch club business has ceased. A small number of their suppliers have closed their businesses due to COVID-19, but their contingency planning ensures that they are able to meet demand.

5.2 Social Care Agency Workers

This framework was developed to meet the need for social care agency workers within services across Scotland's local authorities and housing associations, as well as for Cordia, NHS Scotland and the Scottish Prison Service.

During the Covid-19 emergency, the Social Care Agency Workers framework offers Scotland Excel members and associate members a route to recruiting temporary care workers where self-isolation and staff absences are undermining the continuity of service provision.

Recent communication with framework providers has indicated that there is increased demand for agency workers, but they are able to maintain capacity to respond to requests.

The framework provides several key benefits including:

- high level job descriptions for core roles
- a clear service specification to ensure the provision of trained, qualified, registered and vetted agency workers
- provisions for councils to ensure agency staff are paid the Real Living Wage
- improved financial transparency and robust terms & conditions

5.3 Technology Enabled Care

This relatively new framework is designed to enable councils, Health & Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and Scotland Excel associate members to procure technology enabled care and ancillary monitoring services to maintain, promote, and support independent living.

There are 10 lots on this framework including Dispersed Alarm Units, Alarm Triggers and Lifestyle Monitoring Equipment with ancillary monitoring service, which use static movement sensors and software to monitor wellbeing activity, reporting on lack of or unusual movement activities within a person's home.

Scotland Excel is currently supporting the Digital Office in scoping available provision of telecare supplies and services given the likelihood of increased demand for technology enabled care solutions in the coming months. In addition, the procurement activity to support the migration to digital telecare solutions will be accelerated.

Monitoring of calls received by call centres since the start of the lockdown has indicated a 50% reduction in the number of calls received to date. It is thought that the reason for this may be that there is an increasing uptake of services such as Facetime or WhatsApp, alongside a possible reluctance to use the service at a time of crisis. In relation to new installations of equipment in people's homes, the use of PPE and adherence to social distancing will have to be considered as part of any risk assessment.

6. **Summary**

Scotland Excel will continue to support partner organisations through the current crisis. In recognition that operational and financial challenges will continue, we will continue to ensure that our frameworks enable councils and HSCP's to optimise the care offered to their communities.