



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

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**The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**  
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14 May 2020

Dear Clive,

**FOLLOW UP TO 4 MAY SELECT COMMITTEE HEARING**

Thank you for a productive discussion with the Committee last week on a range of issues relating to my department's response to Covid-19. During the session I committed to come back on several further points which are set out below. I am aware you have sent a further letter of 14 May, which I will respond to in due course.

**Local Government Funding**

Councils continue to play an essential role in the nation's response to Covid-19. As I made clear at the hearing, I have made available £3.2 billion in un-ringfenced additional funding for councils, alongside measures worth over £5 billion to ease their immediate cashflow pressures. Since then, the Prime Minister has announced an additional £600 million for infection control in care homes this week. This funding will support care homes to reduce the rate of transmission in, and between, care homes and support wider workforce resilience. Taken together this is an unprecedented package to ensure all councils have the resources they need to continue fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

Across Government we have mobilised even further support: from extra funding for bus services and grants to help local businesses, to a £500m Hardship Fund to enable further reductions in council tax for vulnerable households. In total so far, we have committed over £16 billion to local areas to support councils, businesses and communities.

I am committed to supporting all councils with the additional costs incurred from the extra work we have asked them to do in response to Covid-19 – and on 30 April I wrote to councils asking them to prioritise specific tasks. I expect adult social care to remain the largest area of spend and that local authorities should prioritise additional funding to support local providers – this could include those with whom they do not have contracts if they are under financial strain. As part of this, local authorities have a central role in the critical national task of controlling the outbreak in care homes.

Alongside adult social care, we are supporting local authorities with pressures including: children's services; public health services; fire and rescue services; waste collection services; shielding the clinically extremely vulnerable people; homelessness and rough sleeping; domestic abuse; supporting the NHS; and managing excess deaths. Of course, some local authorities may want to go beyond these immediate priorities and support their communities in other ways, and it is only right that the cost of doing so is met locally.

Councils have consistently asked for flexibility in the use of funding. That is why I decided to pay both tranches of our £3.2 billion additional funding as un-ringfenced grants, so that councils can allocate funding in a way that best targets local needs. However I have been clear that councils, like all parts of the public sector, need to spend public money wisely – prioritising the areas listed above and ensuring good value for money.

The monitoring exercises we are undertaking will provide critical insight into the wider spend and income pressures councils are facing as a result of Covid-19. The returns collected will be an important source of information as to how councils are managing, alongside our engagement with local Leaders and Chief Executives.

## **Section 114 Orders**

My officials continue to work with local government finance officers on how they can ensure the longer-term financial sustainability of their councils. With a response rate of almost 100%, the information provided by local authorities in their data returns forms a critical piece of intelligence for my department in supporting the sector.

Over half of the spending pressures being experienced by single and upper tier councils are in adult social care. For district councils, the pressures are greatest in homelessness services, shielding/community support, and corporate overheads – and as a proportion of total monthly income, income losses are disproportionately higher for district councils. That's why across both waves of the £3.2 billion funding, almost 70% of district councils will receive £1 million or more in support, while over 90% of the funding will go to those with social care responsibilities.

The next monitoring exercise has now commenced and will cover both the first and second tranches of government funding to local government, and the wider pressures associated with Covid-19. We will need councils' ongoing support to ensure the monitoring exercise is as useful as possible. As I said at the hearing, if any local authority has serious concerns about its financial sustainability, I would urge them to approach my department in the first instance.

## **Review of Moratorium on Residential Evictions**

You asked how the Government plans to approach the review of the moratorium on residential evictions. The current legislative measures to protect tenants from eviction are in place until 30 September 2020. In recognition of the ongoing efforts needed to tackle Covid-19, the Coronavirus Act 2020 includes the power to extend the protections in two ways: by changing the length of the notice period landlords are required to provide tenants by up to a maximum of six months, and by extending the date on which these measures will end.

The Government will consider, at the appropriate time, how best to support renters in both the private and social sectors through the recovery period. Any decision to alter the existing emergency measures will be informed by careful consideration of the evidence of their impact on landlords and tenants, alongside Public Health Guidance and the wider government approach to easing restrictions.

We are also continuing to work with the Master of the Rolls to explore a Pre-Action Protocol for claims for possession due to rent arrears by private landlords, as is already in place for landlords in the social sector. My department is working with the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary to understand the role a protocol could play. As ever, this work will be guided by what will deliver the best results for landlords and tenants.

## **Guidance on Day-Care and Respite Services**

We know how beneficial it can be for people to access day care and respite settings, and that is why they are permitted to be open under the Regulations. Responsibility for these settings lies with the Department of Health and Social Care and it is important that these settings follow social distancing guidelines and appropriate PHE guidance – in addition to the shielding advice for vulnerable groups where this applies. Both the advice and guidelines are available publicly on gov.uk.

## **Hospital Discharges to Care Homes**

As the Department of Health and Social Care set out in the Adult Social Care Action Plan on 15 April, all patients being discharged to care homes from hospital should be tested prior to discharge.

My officials have confirmed with DHSC that a small number of people who have tested positive for Covid-19 may be discharged from the NHS within the 14-day period from the onset of Covid-19 symptoms and also require ongoing social care. We are determined to ensure any discharge into nursing or social care does not put residents or staff at risk. To achieve this, most care providers will be able to accommodate these individuals through effective isolation strategies or cohorting policies – such as keeping residents who have tested positive for Covid-19 together in one dedicated area.

If care home providers do not feel they can provide the appropriate care for these individuals through effective isolation strategies or cohorting policies, the individual's local authority should secure alternative appropriate accommodation and care for the remainder of the required isolation period.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP**