

BETTER CARE FUND 2020/21 ASSURANCE UPDATE

1. Purpose

This note provides an update in relation to the 2020/21 Walsall Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund programme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board receives the update and is assured the Walsall Better Care Fund programme (BCF) has been subject to review of performance and spend during financial year 2020/21 in the absence of normal national reporting requirements.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 During 2020, the national BCF team advised mandatory quarterly reporting would be suspended to support local areas in focussing priorities towards their response to the pandemic, COVID-19. This meant local BCF Managers would not attend Health and Wellbeing Board to present quarterly BCF returns as per previous financial years.
- 3.2 Alongside the suspension of national reporting, the national team also advised BCF 2020 policy and planning requirements and guidance would not be published during this period. In the absence of guidance, local areas were asked to roll-over 2019/20 programmes into 2020/21 to support continuity of provision, social care capacity, system resilience and spend from ring-fenced BCF pooled budgets based on local agreement in 2020 to 2021, pending further guidance.
- 3.3 To support the review of spend across programmes during 2020/21, the 2020 BCF policy statement published on 3 December 2020, requested local areas to complete an expenditure template.
The template will outline income and expenditure, including mandatory minimum contributions from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and the use of the Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) grant and Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The completed document with local BCF expenditure will be presented to members in April 2021.

4. Local position

4.1 As a result of the suspension on reporting, Walsall BCF quarterly returns have not been presented to members during financial year 2020/21, however monitoring of the programme has continued through agreed and established governance routes, which remain in place.

Partners have continued to receive assurance and updates in relation to BCF performance and spend through detailed highlight reports presented to members of Walsall BCF Integrated Commissioning and Performance Group, and funding updates, issues with risk share, potential overspends and updates regarding additional COVID-19 funding through Walsall Joint Commissioning Committee Finance sub group.

Locally commissioning leads have focussed on specific schemes that have supported the local COVID-19 response and funded via BCF:

- The Integrated Equipment Store,
- Use of Discharge to Assess step down beds
- The use of re-ablement hours
- The Disabled Facilities Grant

These schemes have been aligned to COVID-19 funding provided by NHSE, allocated to Walsall Adult Social Care to support the system and managed by Walsall CCG. The Integrated Group also continues to monitor the local dashboard, being aware of the number of packages of care, utilisation of beds and length of stay.

4.2 Both Walsall BCF Integrated Group and the Finance group are sub groups of The Joint Commissioning Committee (JCC). All meet monthly to discuss matters relating to BCF. In relation to spend and performance of schemes, the JCC receive monthly updates regarding the monitoring of the 2020/21 programme, use of the COVID-19 fund and have been assured of performance across specific schemes through detailed reporting.

4.3 Moving forward, 2021/22 planning will begin, in line with published planning requirements from the national team expected before March 2021. Governance will remain in place for BCF, with assurance and approval taking place at JCC level and operational updates, review of performance and spend through agreed JCC sub groups.

Background papers

2020 BCF Policy Statement

[Better Care Fund: policy statement 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/better-care-fund)

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