

Essex County Council
Adult Social Care
PO Box 11, County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1LX



Clive Weir, Chair
Simon Harniess, Director of Development
Essex Care Association
251-255 Church Road
Benfleet
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13 November 2020

Dear Clive and Simon

Live at Home tender

Thank you for your letter of 22 October outlining concerns your members have raised about our tender for domiciliary care services. I recognise that there are significant pressures on this sector and that these will be exacerbated by recent events. To allow more time for providers to complete their responses and deal with immediate operational concerns the deadline for submission will be extended by six months. I am conscious that national living wage is due to increase in April so prices will be adjusted from this point until the new go-live date. We will confirm the details of how this will be achieved along with a revised tender deadline through our supplier portal shortly.

We understand your concerns about the reduced number of face to face visits that have been carried out by social care staff during the pandemic. As a service we have had to support staff to balance the need to fulfil our statutory duties, whilst protecting vulnerable adults by reducing footfall that is non-essential, both to care homes and individual's homes. This is also in response to the specific DHSC guidance for social care staff on visiting. However, we do see the critical role our staff play in supporting those people who receive care and support. We will continue to work to ensure that where a visit is needed it takes place. We have a clear process in place to ensure that such visits are done safely.

We understand the pressure this may put on care workers who are seeing need on a daily basis; so we would encourage your members to continue to flag to Adult Social Care where need has changed and we need to review our support. Our commitment is to respond appropriately when issues are raised, and we will ensure our frontline staff can respond as swiftly as they are able to. We continue to review our processes in respect of safe visiting, to be sure our response reflects the risks to the service user and all staff involved in their care and support.

Turning to your specific questions:

1. I note from your covering email that action has already been taken to help with problems your members are experiencing with Proactis.

2. The drafting of Schedule 3 is the same as the current LAH agreement – providers should submit invoices for the actual time visited which is then rounded up to the nearest 15 minutes. I can confirm that ECC has no intention of introducing minute-by-minute billing and I have asked for the wording of the schedule to be reviewed to ensure it is consistent with this intent.
3. ECC's approach to TUPE information has been updated since the last LAH tender, this is why more information is being asked this time.

I shall arrange for a formal communication to be sent to the market confirming the points made above and setting out a revised tender and implementation timetable.

Finally, can I ask you to pass on my thanks to your members and their staff for all their care and dedication in these unprecedented times. Your efforts are really appreciated, and I look forward to strengthening our relationship with both the ECA and its members in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Presmeg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nick Presmeg
Executive Director for Adult Social Care