

## **FURTHER EXTENDED COVID-19 Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme**

### **Scheme Procedures and Details for Payment under Further Extended Scheme**

**Introduction:** A Further Extended Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme (the “**Further Extended Scheme**”) was announced by the State to support Nursing Homes by a contribution towards additional costs arising from Covid-19, from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. In supporting contributions towards these costs, the Further Extended Scheme’s focus transitioned towards supporting Nursing Homes’ implementation of recommendations contained within the Report of the COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel, as published in August 2020. In order to avail of the Further Extended Scheme from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020, each nursing home in receipt of funding must commit to supporting the implementation of the COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel, as they relate to nursing homes. The Health Service Executive (**HSE**) administers the Further Extended Scheme and makes payments to the Nursing Homes. The Department of Health has requested that the National Treatment Purchase Fund (**NTPF**) administer the application process and provide support and advice to the HSE. These Further Extended Scheme Details are published on a dedicated section of the NTPF and HSE websites.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 the outbreak threshold under TAPS was amended. This change means that a nursing home undergoing a verified outbreak may now be paid up to the lower of three times the value of its Standard Assistance Payment Cap or up to the maximum amount of €60,000. This change will provide a proportionate increase in the level of assistance available to smaller nursing homes. This increased support is available for claims relating to costs incurred from January 2021 onwards.

- 1. Interpretation:** In these Further Extended Scheme Details the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

**Additional Allowable Costs** are costs which are both Additional Costs and Allowable Costs.

**Additional Costs** are costs incurred by the Nursing Home which would not have been incurred were it not for the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Allowable Costs** are costs that may be included in an application for support under the Further Extended Scheme. **Note:** Allowable Costs exclude Excluded Items and non Covid-19 specific costs. Furthermore, Allowable Costs cannot include any costs incurred in respect of which the Nursing Home has been reimbursed, compensated or has received remittance from any other source. Any costs claimed by a Nursing Home in respect of increased work as a result of Covid-19 must be capable of being evidenced and available for review by the HSE and/or the NTPF.

*The Further Extended Scheme covers additional allowable costs incurred during the period of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. In addition, any stock purchased but not used during the further extended scheme period is not allowed. All stock movements may be subject to audit or checks of any expenditure.*

**Excluded Items** include the following non-exhaustive list which may be amended at the absolute discretion of the HSE:

- I. Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”)

- II. HSE support staff and supplies
- III. Legal advice
- IV. Capital Costs
- V. Additional payments to core staff, which
  - a. Either in respect of core hours, overtime or premium payments result in rates of pay exceeding rates payable in respect of HSE consolidated salary scales for equivalent or comparable roles;
  - Or*
  - b. Where not agreed formally in advance of the working hours to which the payment relates.

For the avoidance of doubt, overtime or premium payments will be excluded where such payments are not payable in respect of equivalent or comparable roles in the HSE
- VI. Vouchers or gift cards provided to employees, agency staff, directors, proprietors or associates of the Nursing Home
- VII. Bonus payments or any increased payments to Nursing Home proprietors or company Directors
- VIII. Bonus payments to all staff
- IX. Any recharges to connected companies
- X. Loss of income
- XI. Interest payments
- XII. Tax
- XIII. Depreciation
- XIV. Amortisation
- XV. Rent
- XVI. Repayments

**Overall Monthly Cap** is the maximum amount that may be paid in respect of each month to a Nursing Home under the Further Extended Scheme. This amount applies to the aggregate of payments under the Standard Assistance Payment and the Outbreak Assistance Payment. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 the maximum amount that can be paid to a Nursing Home experiencing a verified outbreak is;

Equal to the lowest of:

- three times the Standard Assistance Payment Cap for the month;
- up to the maximum amount of €60,000;

In addition, the amounts claimed hereunder must be less than or equal to the total increase in costs the Nursing Home incurred or will incur in the month as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

**Standard Assistance Payment Cap** is calculated by reference to the following sliding scale:

- €600 per resident per month for the first 40 residents; and thereafter
- €300 per resident per month for the next 40 residents; and thereafter
- €150 per resident per month for each subsequent resident.

The amount paid in any month further to applications for Standard Assistance Payment may not exceed the Standard Assistance Payment Cap.

The maximum level of financial support under the Further Extended Scheme will be calculated by reference to the average number of residents in the Nursing Home in the month preceding the month to which the claim relates. For example, January claim will be based on the December average occupancy, February claim will be based on the average occupancy for January, etc. Any part of a claim that is in excess of the registered maximum capacity of residents in the applicant Nursing Home shall be ineligible.

For the purposes of calculating the Standard Assistance Payment Cap, the average number of residents in the Nursing Home is calculated as follows:

- I. The Nursing Home identifies all residents who were in active receipt of residential care services in the month
  - II. In respect of each of these residents, the applicant calculates the number of days for which the applicant charged fully (and can so demonstrate) for residential care services for that resident for that month
  - III. Sum the number of days calculated in paragraph II above for all residents identified in paragraph I
  - IV. The average number of residents in the Nursing Home in the month is equal to the sum calculated in paragraph III divided by the number of days in the calendar month.
2. **Scope:** All applications from Nursing Homes under the Further Extended Scheme. In order to make an application, the applicant must be a Nursing Home as defined under section 2 of the Health (Nursing Homes) Act 1990. Such centres owned and/or operated by the Health Service Executive and such centres which have entered into an arrangement with the HSE under s.38 of the Health Act 2004 are not eligible for this Further Extended Scheme.
3. **Further Extended Scheme Details:** There are two separate types of Covid-19 assistance with a single application form and separate Claim Forms in Excel to make monthly claims, if required. The Further Extended Scheme consists of a Standard Assistance Payment and an Outbreak Assistance Payment. To qualify for the Outbreak Assistance Payment, the Nursing Home outbreak must be confirmed by HSE Public Health and notified to the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

#### 4. **Standard Assistance Payment**

The Standard Assistance Payment is a retrospective payment, based on actual costs incurred. Allowable costs can arise in executing the following measures:

- I. Implementing higher than normal infection prevention and management measures
- II. Enhanced environmental and waste management
- III. Providing for Covid-19 testing on site
- IV. Interpreting and following NPHET, HSE, HIQA or DoH guidance
- V. Ensuring physical distancing measures and as of 28th March 2020 “cocooning” measures
- VI. Training and education of staff on new measures and practices, particularly in areas of enhanced care
- VII. Implementing evolving protocols and necessary practices, including cohorting of patients with Covid-19
- VIII. Developing and instigating local measures to protect staff and residents
- IX. Escalating measures upon suspected cases of staff or residents

- X. Implementing alternative arrangements, including staff rostering during staff self-isolation periods
- XI. Introducing contingency based on suspected cases becoming actual cases and escalating measures to prevent contagion
- XII. Pay and non-pay costs that are incurred in servicing isolation or cohorting capacity (for example, where staff cannot work across the isolated and non-isolated areas of the nursing home).

#### **Claims for Costs of setting aside capacity for use as 'isolation rooms' for residents**

The contribution towards the costs of setting aside isolation rooms will only apply to those nursing homes that (a) have multi-occupancy rooms, as declared on their latest registration with HIQA and (b) have an occupancy rate that would place the nursing home at risk of being unable to isolate residents either in single rooms, or alone in multi-occupancy rooms. It is important here to note that the State/this Scheme will not provide a funding mechanism for such rooms where there is already sufficient free occupancy in the nursing home to provide for isolation facilities.

If a nursing home contains multi-occupancy rooms, and its occupancy rate in the month of the claim is 85% or higher, the nursing home will be eligible to claim a contribution on the following basis:

- €1,000 per month per room left free, up to a maximum of €5,000 (5 rooms) unless the following condition generates a lower number of rooms, in which case that is the maximum claimable amount:
  - 50% of the total number of multi-occupancy rooms available, as per the latest registration with HIQA.

For example, if a nursing home has a registered capacity for 100 residents, has 90 residents in place (90% occupancy), but only has 6 double rooms, it can claim up to €3,000 (3 rooms).

- *Exception – Small nursing homes:* If a nursing home with mixed single and multi-occupancy rooms has fewer than 40 rooms, has at least 2 multi-occupancy rooms, and is at capacity of 85% or higher, the nursing home will be able to claim the contribution towards keeping at least 2 rooms free for isolation purposes.

Any additional variable costs associated with the provision of isolation capacity continue to be eligible through the Scheme terms and conditions.

Nursing Homes claiming this contribution are be required to self-certify the occupancy rate for the month and to attach a copy of current registration documentation from HIQA that will allow validation of the calculation in respect of multi-occupancy rooms.

A Standard Assistance Payment can be made only after receipt of a Standard Assistance Payment Application (formerly "Retrospective Standard Assistance Reconciliation - Form B"), which is available on the NTPF and HSE websites. The form will require the completion of a description of and data relating to the measures undertaken as specified on the form.

In respect of an applicant's first application under the Standard Assistance Payment Form of the COVID-19 Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme, Extended Scheme or Further Extended Scheme, it shall be accompanied by the latest registration notification submitted to HIQA declaring bed occupancy (NF60) and the latest financial information of the applicant. This financial information may include:

- Most recently filed accounts with the Companies Office;
- Or
- Where a Nursing Home is not required to file relevant accounts, relevant accounts, projections or business plans prepared by the Nursing Home should be submitted.

The applicant must furnish to the HSE, on demand, NF60 Forms and a copy its up-to-date financial accounts.

Note that **new applicants are required to submit the above NF60 and latest financial information.** Where an applicant has provided this information previously under the COVID-19 Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme or Extended Scheme i.e. in respect of any application from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020, this information is not required again. However, the HSE may require an applicant to furnish an NF60 and/or the latest financial information in respect of the applicant at any time.

## **5. Outbreak Assistance Payment**

Where a Nursing Home has undertaken enhanced actions in response to a Covid-19 outbreak and has subsequently incurred significant further costs which have not been claimed for under the Standard Assistance Payment, it may submit a separate application for an Outbreak Assistance Payment.

To qualify for the Outbreak Assistance Payment, the Nursing Home outbreak must be confirmed by HSE Public Health and notified to the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC). The Public Health data will also confirm the outbreak sequence. Claims may be made from the Onset First Case Date, once the outbreak has been confirmed by the HPSC daily Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting ("CIDR") file.

The following categories of expenses are deemed to be allowable expenses under the Outbreak Assistance Payment:

- I. Additional payroll costs incurred as a result of a Covid-19 outbreak:
  - a. Extra costs incurred as a result of additional clinical, administrative and support staff costs due to a Covid-19 outbreak (this excludes bonus payments or any increased payments to Nursing Home proprietors or Directors and bonus payments to all staff). For the avoidance of doubt, overtime or premium payments will be excluded where such payments are not payable in respect of equivalent or comparable roles in the HSE.
- II. Reasonable and appropriate extra costs incurred in order to provide accommodation for staff where it is not feasible to avail of HSE provided staff accommodation:
  - a. Evidence will be required to demonstrate why additional staff were required to be eligible for reimbursement under the Further Extended Scheme.

- III. Costs incurred in relation to infection prevention and control:
  - a. Additional education costs in relation to infection prevention and control required as a result of Covid-19 (excluding education provided by the HPSC and HSE, such as that provided through HSE LanD and Centres of Nursing Midwifery Education/Centres of Learning).
  - b. Additional laundry costs (excluding capital costs) incurred as a result of a Covid-19 outbreak
  - c. Additional waste disposal costs (excluding capital costs) incurred as a result of a Covid-19 outbreak
  - d. Additional disinfectant products required as a result of a Covid-19 outbreak
- IV. Equipment purchased as a result of a Covid-19, as specified below:
  - a. Blood pressure monitors
  - b. Drip stands
  - c. Commodes
  - d. Costs associated with equipment required to monitor temperatures

*Note that only expenses explicitly listed above will be eligible for reimbursement under the Further Extended Scheme. Items included in the list of Excluded Items specified earlier in Section 1 may not be included in an application for Outbreak Assistance, except where capital costs relate to the purchase of equipment categories explicitly specified above.*

An Outbreak Assistance Payment can be made only after receipt of an Outbreak Assistance Payment Application Form (formerly Form C), which is available on the NTPF and HSE websites.

The applicant cannot include any costs incurred in respect of which the Nursing Home has been reimbursed, compensated or has received remittance from any other source (including the Standard Assistance Payment).

Expenses should be consistent with current and any further HSE, NPHET, DoH and HIQA guidance on dealing with Covid-19 outbreaks, including the “Regulatory Assessment Framework of the Preparedness of Designated Centres for Older People for a Covid- 19 Outbreak”, dated 21 April 2020.

*Note that all claims made under the Outbreak Assistance Payment require independently certified verification, except where claims amount to less than €10,000 per month. The independent certified verification of claims shall be provided in the compulsory format, which can be downloaded from the NTPF or HSE websites*

***N.B. Applicants are advised to carefully consider allowable and excluded cost items under the Standard Assistance Payment and Outbreak Assistance Payment before submitting claims. Applicants should note that costs included under an application for Standard Assistance Payment should not be included in an application for Outbreak Assistance Payment even where the full amount applied for under the Standard Assistance Payment stream is not paid.***

## 6. Procedure

6.1 All Nursing Homes who wish to participate in the Further Extended Scheme must sign and complete an application form (and Claim Form(s), if appropriate) for the Further Extended Scheme. The application form can be downloaded from the NTPF and HSE websites and must be signed by an authorised person on behalf of the Nursing Home and sent to the dedicated NTPF e-mail address [covid19support@ntpf.ie](mailto:covid19support@ntpf.ie)

6.2 To apply for a Standard Assistance Payment, Nursing Homes will submit a Standard Assistance Payment Form to the dedicated NTPF e-mail address [covid19support@ntpf.ie](mailto:covid19support@ntpf.ie) by the closing date outlined in Section 8.

6.3 To apply for an Outbreak Assistance Payment, Nursing Homes will submit an Outbreak Assistance Payment Form to the dedicated NTPF e-mail address [covid19support@ntpf.ie](mailto:covid19support@ntpf.ie) by the closing date outlined in Section 8.

All Nursing Homes who apply for the Outbreak Assistance Payment must provide a detailed description of the COVID measures undertaken associated with the costs claimed. Any application may be subject to a review of the severity of the individual outbreak and extent of response by the particular Nursing Home.

All Nursing Homes must provide independently certified verification of claims made under the Outbreak Assistance Payment in the compulsory format, except where claims amount to less than €10,000 per month.

6.4 All **new** applicants must provide their latest NF60 submission and financial information if it is their first time applying for the Standard Assistance Payment or Outbreak Assistance Payment under the COVID-19 Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme, Extended Scheme or Further Extended Scheme.

6.5 The NTPF will verify and validate each claim in accordance with the Further Extended Scheme Rules and advise on the proposed appropriate amount to be paid to each Nursing Home by the HSE.

6.6 The NTPF or the HSE will, on a sample, and/or, risk basis, carry out formal audits of claims made retrospectively and will be supported in this work by professional auditors. It will be necessary for the Nursing Home to be able to provide vouched evidence of Covid-19 expenditure as any expenditure that is not vouched will be deducted from future claims or NHSS payments, or otherwise recoverable as contract debt. All records shall be kept by the Nursing Homes for a minimum period of 6 years.

6.7 The HSE will process the Further Extended Scheme payments in a similar manner but separately to the normal monthly NHSS payment to the Nursing Home's bank account.

6.8 The NTPF and the HSE may at any time review and verify any claims made under the Further Extended Scheme. The outcome of any such exercise may result in a change in any advice given by the NTPF hereunder, or a change in payments made or amounts due.

## **7. Process**

7.1 The NTPF will confirm receipt of the signed Standard Assistance Payment Form and/or Outbreak Assistance Payment Form.

- 7.2 Each Nursing Home will provide information on relevant charged bed day activity by unit to the NTPF so that relevant payment caps can be calculated. The process to calculate payment caps is outlined within Section 1, above.
- 7.3 The NTPF will verify that the Standard Assistance Payment Form and/or Outbreak Assistance Payment Form submitted have been completed correctly
- 7.4 The NTPF will calculate the Standard Assistance Payment Cap and the Overall Monthly Cap for the relevant month.
- 7.5 The NTPF will assess the payment amount for the relevant month in accordance with the Further Extended Scheme Rules.
- 7.6 The NTPF will advise the HSE of the proposed payment amount for each Nursing Home as assessed above, as per an agreed Memorandum of Understanding put in place between the NTPF and the HSE.
- 7.7 The HSE will validate and process the payments in accordance with the HSE's own payment control procedures.
- 7.8 Final payment approval sign-off will be provided at relevant senior management level within the HSE.
- 7.9 The above process will be repeated for the following month.
- 7.10 Final payments for the Further Extended Scheme will be made in respect of the month of June 2021.

### **Glossary of Relevant Organisations**

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| NPHET | National Public Health Emergency Team       |
| HSE   | Health Service Executive                    |
| DOH   | Department of Health                        |
| DPER  | Department of Public Expenditure and Reform |
| NTPF  | National Treatment Purchase Fund            |
| HIQA  | Health Information and Quality Authority    |
| HPSC  | Health Protection and Surveillance Centre   |