

## **Frequently asked questions – Coronavirus**

The Department fully appreciates that you, families and providers will have queries about the Fund given the current Coronavirus situation.

We want to reassure you that we are closely monitoring the developing situation and following Government guidance.

We and our contractors, Mott MacDonald are operating business as usual and have put in place a contingency plan to minimise any potential disruption. We will update you should any changes occur to this.

### **1. Can we still make applications?**

Yes. We are currently operating business as usual and will update you should any changes occur.

### **2. Will applications take longer than up to 20 working days to process?**

No. We are currently operating business as usual and will update you should any changes occur.

### **3. Will the ASF Helpline maintain its core operating hours?**

Yes, the helpline is operating as usual and we will update you should any changes occur.

### **4. Can therapy be delivered virtually if families/providers are not able to meet face to face for sessions?**

Yes, if the family and LA/RAA agree with the change of delivery method. Any costs that was part of the original application that are unspent will need to be returned to the ASF as part of the spend confirmation process at the end of the funded therapy. The LA/RAA will need to ensure that a safe and secure method is used to ensure confidentiality, data protection and privacy during the virtual sessions.

### **5. Can LA/RAA staff who are clinically qualified e.g. psychologists or therapeutically trained adoption support social workers take over delivery in the short term where a provider is not able to deliver due to self-isolation?**

Yes, if the individual is suitably qualified to deliver the therapy then it is possible for the funding to move to internal delivery. However, the therapy must be similar, costings the same or less and financial year split accurate. Any costs, that were part of the original application that are unspent will need to be returned to the ASF as part of the spend confirmation process at the end of the funded therapy.

### **6. If the delivery of ASF approved funded therapy is not possible by virtual means, can we use ASF funding for something different?**

Yes you can but only if the alternative therapy is within scope of the Fund e.g. additional therapeutic parenting support to parents to help them manage the emotional well-being of their children during this period. The costings must be the

same or less and the financial year split accurate. Any costs, that were part of the original application that are unspent will need to be returned to the ASF as part of the spend confirmation process at the end of the funded therapy.

**7. Can funding be transferred from 2019/20 to 2020/21 where therapy is delayed due to the Coronavirus?**

In cases where sessions have been delayed or postponed due to Coronavirus, funding that has already been issued to local authorities/regional adoption agencies and allocated to sessions in 2019/20 will not be required to be returned. This will provide certainty to families and providers that sessions that have been postponed can be recommenced in due course. We will however require documentary evidence to demonstrate that funds from 2019/20 have been used in this way. Please use the provided template for this purpose.

**8. Does the three-month therapy rule still apply when making an application for a specialist assessment?**

No. LAs/RAAs can apply for up to 6 months therapy at the time of applying for a specialist assessment. This should help reduce the burden on social workers and LA/RAA staff and enable support to continue pending the outcome of the assessment and start of any therapy identified from the assessment.

**9. Will retrospective applications be accepted where the delay in submission is due to coronavirus?**

For services to be delivered in 2020/21, a delay in submitting an application due to coronavirus will be accepted as a valid retrospective reason.

**10. Do we have to complete spend confirmations and return unspent funding from 2019/20 by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020?**

No. However, please return as soon as possible. If you wish to make a top up application, please use this opportunity to complete the spend confirmation from the previous application. You will continue to receive spend confirmation reminders until these are completed.