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Via email

HSC Board Chief Executive
HSC Trust Chief Executives

Dear Colleagues

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): NORTHERN IRELAND GUIDANCE FOR PEOPLE RECEIVING DIRECT PAYMENTS

I wish to draw to your attention new guidance published for people receiving Direct Payments during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, '**Coronavirus (COVID 19): Northern Ireland Guidance for People Receiving Direct Payments**'. The guidance, developed in collaboration with Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board, should be implemented with immediate effect and can be found at the following link on the Department of Health's website:

www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-direct-payments

Given the ongoing challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, I would encourage Health and Social Care Trusts to apply flexibility in their support of Direct Payment recipients. This new guidance references how such flexibilities can be applied.

HSC Trust named (key) workers have a major role in assessing the care and support needs of service users. During the pandemic they have had to adapt to meet those new challenges. The Department recognises the hard work and dedication of this work force in serving the needs of their clients. Named workers know their clients well and their individual circumstances and they remain best placed to assess how Direct Payments can be used to meet agreed outcomes.

We must continue to keep the care and support needs of service users uppermost in our minds. In order to respond in a timely manner to service user requests, Trusts may wish to consider implementing measures to reduce the levels of bureaucracy in the decision-making process. These flexibilities will however only apply during the pandemic and clients will need to have this explained to them before any changes to their Direct Payments are agreed.

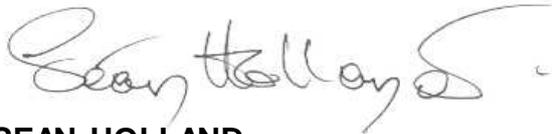
I understand fully that such flex may incur additional costs. Minister Swann has approved new funding (£500k) to the HSCB, for the 3 month period covering 1 April to 30 June, which it will ring-fence, and to which HSC Trusts can apply to access through existing cost pressure processes to mitigate extra Direct Payment costs arising during the

COVID-19 pandemic in that period. Please disseminate this information to colleagues and key workers in your Trust.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this matter further then please contact Mark Anderson at Mark.Anderson@health-ni.gov.uk

Your cooperation is much appreciated and it will help to ensure those in receipt of Direct Payments will continue to have their needs met during these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely



SEAN HOLLAND

Chief Social Work Officer/Deputy Secretary

cc: Richard Pengelly, DoH
Marie Rouston, HSCB
Joyce McKee, HSCB
SDS Implementation Officers, HSC Trusts
Carer's Co-ordinators, HSC Trusts
Mary Donaghy, HSCB
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