

From: [Ruth Hutchinson](#)
Sent: 25 July 2023 21:08
To: [Darren Williams](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Remaining COMF money - Spend Proposal - Runnymede Borough Council
Attachments: [Guidance_on_use_of_COMF_Letter.pdf](#)

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Dear Darren

Thank you for your email and proposals. I have liaised with colleagues and we agree that the proposal below is in line with the scope and use of the fund as outlined below. The particular focus on areas of relative deprivation in particular relates to the final bullet below.

Ruth

Scope of use of the fund

The main scope of the fund remains the control of COVID-19 and dealing with its management and consequences. For the avoidance of doubt, this scope can also include funding work on:

- Public health action on addressing the impact of COVID-19 on health outcomes and health inequalities,
- Public health projects aimed at directly addressing health inequalities arising from the pandemic
- Public health prevention projects intend to prevent or mitigate health inequalities or unequal impact on populations in future outbreaks

Ruth Hutchinson

Pronouns: she/her #mynameis: ruth

Director of Public Health

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Business support: Jacob Holderness Jacob.holderness@surreycc.gov.uk

From: Darren Williams <darren.williams@runnymede.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2023 1:52 PM
To: Ruth Hutchinson <ruth.hutchinson@surreycc.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Remaining COMF money - Spend Proposal - Runnymede Borough Council

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Hello Ruth

I am very sorry to write again, knowing how extremely busy you will be and, given that in reality the subject of COMF will no longer be a top priority. I only write as the guidance states that we should engage with the Public Health lead.

If you could please consider the email below it would be much appreciated, as using the funding in such a way by the end of the financial year will require us to move forward as quickly as possible. I am on leave for two weeks from tomorrow so if you could reply at some point over that period, I will then pick it up upon my return. Given the need to utilise the funding, having already discussed the proposal with other public health colleagues in NW Surrey Alliance, who are in support of the proposal, if you are unable to respond then I will intend to proceed given the support already received. Your seal of approval would be much welcomed though!

Kind regards

Darren

From: Darren Williams
Sent: Thursday, July 6, 2023 12:06 PM
To: ruth.hutchinson@surreycc.gov.uk
Subject: Remaining COMF money - Spend Proposal - Runnymede Borough Council

Dear Ruth

The most recent guidance regarding the use of Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF), provides opportunity to spend any monies remaining unallocated, in the 2023/2024 financial year, and in doing so states the requirement to have consulted with Public Health leads prior to any spend against the new guidance in certain aspects. Given this, I am writing to you on behalf of Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) regarding how we would like to allocate the final sum of money to a project that we feel meets the category of **“Interventions to address specific needs in the local community and workplaces which have arisen as a result of the pandemic”**.

Having considered the area of focus the Council would like to spend the remaining budget, the Corporate Leadership Team feel that the focus, if possible, should be on children and young people. As we know, the pandemic provided very mixed experiences for children with varying degree of impact, some of which is still not formally identified or quantifiable. Whilst exercise was promoted during the pandemic as one of the few reasons to leave home, for children, this was offset by the closure of facilities, including playgrounds and other recreational facilities in communities, which when combined with the need to isolate, resulted in children being left unable to develop through socialisation at such facilities. Now, with the ongoing cost of living crisis, the opportunity for some

children and families to engage in recreation and opportunities to socialise outside of formal learning settings, is limited by affordability.

Given the loss of such facilities throughout the pandemic and the ongoing pressure families will face during this cost-of-living crisis. RBC would like to use the remaining 165k within its COMF budget to invest in quality play spaces as an enhancement of existing facilities, that would provide a legacy of opportunity for children to participate in play. The intention would be to use the money within the identified areas of relative deprivation within Runnymede, as identified by the work of both Runnymede BC and Surrey County Council. Should you wish to have a greater link in the project to the impact on children during the pandemic, additional elements could be considered to enhance the proposal, should indicative support be provided.

Considering this proposal with the Public Health lead in the NW Surrey Alliance, it is felt that the focus and proposal outlined is supported by some research and evidence published, which highlights the impact of the pandemic on children and the importance of play. I have provided excerpts of at the bottom of this email and which can be summarised as follows:

1. Children & young people have been badly affected by the pandemic, this has life-long consequences, and more support is needed.
2. The mental health impact in Children & young people.
3. A differential impact on different groups within communities and the importance of play in reducing inequalities.

I hope that you will be able to support our request to use the last element of COMF money for this purpose and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Darren Williams

Supporting Information:

1. ***CYP have been badly affected by the pandemic, this has life-long consequences, and more support is needed.***

<https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/resource/growing-problems-in-detail-covid-19-s-impact-on-health-care-for-children-and-young-people-in-england>

“The Covid-19 pandemic and the nation’s efforts to control the virus have had a dramatic impact on children and young people’s health, care and wellbeing. Schools were closed, expected health care appointments did not take place, and children’s mental health deteriorated. By the time services began to be restored, waiting lists had ballooned and, under significant pressure, the NHS has not been able to keep up with demand for care.

Early intervention and prompt treatment are particularly important for children and young people, as poor health in childhood can have lifelong consequences. This is clearly the case for childhood cancer, where fast diagnosis and treatment is time-critical, but is also warranted for many other conditions ranging from childhood obesity to diabetes management. The growing

waiting lists for planned paediatric care, coupled with the increase in urgent GP referrals, signal that access to timely care is being severely compromised and that children are suffering as a result.

Community services have not escaped the pressures of the pandemic, and children's services are facing significant backlogs. One serious effect of the nationwide lockdowns was the negative **impact** on children and young people's speech, language and communication. The inability to access services including speech and language therapy puts children at risk of a range of negative outcomes related to their education, social interactions and behaviour. These disadvantages are affecting children who already have a greater level of need, and so are exacerbating inequalities.

The sharp increase in children and young people with mental health problems is a serious concern. Services are facing unprecedented levels of demand, and young people are waiting longer to receive mental health care. There has been a surge in eating disorder cases, and conditions are deteriorating to the extent that a greater number of children and young people are attending A&E departments. The challenges that mental health services are facing are currently unsustainable and should be prioritised with a high level of urgency.

It is clear that health care services for children and young people, just like adults, are facing an uphill battle to recover, but they rarely get the same level of scrutiny or exposure in recovery discussions. If we want to build back fairer, children's health should be prioritised, but **historically** this has not been the case. Children and young people have been severely impacted by the pandemic, and more support and funding for services should be put in place in order to avoid disadvantaging a whole generation of people. Without further action, the impacts of the pandemic will be compounded and will be felt for a long time to come”.

2. **Impact on Mental Health**

<https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/share/NUTMITZYDU938GDM3IEI?target=10.1111/camh.12501>

“Our search and review yielded 116 articles presenting data on a total of 127,923 children and adolescents; 50,984 child and adolescent proxy reports (e.g., parents, healthcare practitioners); and >3,000 chart reviews. A high prevalence of COVID-19-related fear was noted among children and adolescents, as well as more depressive and anxious symptoms compared with prepandemic estimates. Older adolescents, girls, and children and adolescents living with neurodiversities and/or chronic physical conditions were more likely to experience negative mental health outcomes. Many studies reported mental health deterioration among children and adolescents due to COVID-19 pandemic control measures. Physical exercise, access to entertainment, positive familial relationships, and social support were associated with better mental health outcomes”.

3. **Importance of play, highlighting inequalities and effect on mental health**

<https://www.tandfonline.com/share/I7YUBBEQH24UYG3RKEJC?target=10.1080/03004279.2022.2052235>

During the pandemic, parents from disadvantaged backgrounds reported spending less time on activities with their babies and toddlers, compared with parents from more advantaged backgrounds. During the lockdown, children from disadvantaged backgrounds spent less time on play or activities requiring outdoor space, or access to books. Young children, in general,

experienced an increase in TV and touchscreen use for babies and toddlers. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds were particularly likely to have high daily screen use. Babies and toddlers from disadvantaged backgrounds have been missing out on activities to support their development, compared to children of highly educated, well-paid parents.

Conclusion and recommendations: The clear message from the studies consulted here underscore significant concerns over the child and adolescent mental health. To conclude, greater attention should be paid to the value of play experiences.

Darren Williams | Corporate Head of Community Services | Runnymede Borough Council
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