

Providers were supported with the increased cost and logistics required to administer the expanded testing programme of staff and visitors.

A £120 million [Workforce Capacity Fund](#) was provided to supplement and strengthen workforce capacity in the sector.

A national 'call to action' was launched in February inviting new applicants interested in short-term work, which has received over 3,000 applicants, alongside a national recruitment campaign promoting careers in social care.

Deborah Sturdy was appointed as Chief Nurse for social care to provide the professional leadership to and support the wellbeing of the ASC nursing workforce.

Guidance and tools to staff and employers on how staff can manage their personal mental health and wellbeing was issued.

Care staff were provided with free access to a number of mobile applications to support their mental health and wellbeing.

What do stakeholders think?

Whilst stakeholders welcomed the Workforce Capacity Fund being provided to mitigate these workforce capacity issues, it came late; the guidance and grant conditions being announced on 29 January 2021, and the first tranche of funding not being paid until February 2021. Stakeholders believe that if funding had been provided as part of the winter plan in September it would have reduced the risk of the small number of cases of COVID-19-positive staff continuing to work in care homes

The additional ICF funding, which ensures that providers can afford to pay staff who are isolating in line with government guidance their normal wages while doing so, is greatly appreciated by the sector. As of 26 April 2021, Capacity Tracker data reported by care providers suggests that 83.6% of care homes with staff self-isolating were paying them their full wages to do so, meaning some were not, and there are reports that some of those providers are not paying anything above statutory sick pay (SSP). The decision to not pay self-isolating staff full wages is taken by each individual employer, and whilst government can provide the funding to enable them to do so if they wish, it does not currently have the levers to ensure that they do.

Stakeholders note that the streamlining of recruitment processes and onboarding, and the addition of staff banks, have had a very positive impact on their staff capacity and vacancy rates, and as a result are seeing cost savings through reduced agency costs.

However, it is felt that these interventions should go further to address recruitment difficulties, which are greater than those in the NHS. As an example, following the