

Guidance

# Contain Outbreak Management Fund: guidance – financial year 2020 to 2021

Updated 6 May 2022

## Applies to England

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# 1. Introduction

The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provides English local authorities (LAs) with financial support to be used for test, trace and contain activity. This document sets out how the COMF currently operates and the background on how the COMF has adapted over time in response to the development of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In June 2020, the government distributed £300 million to English LAs to action the development of local outbreak management plans, under the former name of the Test and Trace Support Service Grant. These plans were put in place to implement measures to identify and contain outbreaks and break the viral chain of transmission. All 151 upper-tier local authorities (UTLAs) published their Local Outbreak Management Plans by 1 July 2020.

The Test and Trace Support Service Grant was subsequently renamed as the COMF and expanded to provide LAs with further financial support. Since then, the funding formula and scope of the COMF has developed in response to the changing nature of the pandemic. The criteria for distribution and spending have adapted to allow English LAs to tailor their coronavirus responses to suit the needs of their communities. See a [comprehensive overview of funding amounts that have been allocated to LAs until 2 December 2020](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contain-outbreak-management-fund-payments-to-local-authorities) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contain-outbreak-management-fund-payments-to-local-authorities>). Further FAQs on this are found in [appendix A](#) below. Funding provided in the financial year 2020 to 2021 can be carried forward into the following financial year but must be spent within the financial year 2021 to 2022. LAs are required to respond to the grant determination letters by June 2022.

## 2. Funding allocations and criteria

### **Allocation of funding from 6 January to 31 March 2021 – national lockdown to roadmap**

All English LAs entered a period of national lockdown on 6 January 2021 and on 22 February 2021 the government published the [COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>) detailing the roadmap out of lockdown.

For the period 6 January to 31 March 2021, the COMF will make payments to all UTLAs at a rate of £4 per head of population per 28 days, which will be made in 2 instalments over this period. This funding is worth over £225 million per month and can be used to fund local coronavirus response public health activities such as additional contact tracing, testing for hard-to-reach groups and public health communications.

## **Allocation of funding from 2 December 2020 to 5 January 2021 – local restriction tiers**

During this period, English LAs were subject to restrictions based on the tiering system as set out in the [COVID-19 Winter Plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-winter-plan) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-winter-plan>) published on 23 November 2020. Detailed below is the level of COMF entitlement for UTLAs during this period. Further details of the COMF funding formula for this period was communicated in a letter sent to all English LAs on the 1 December 2020 (see [appendix B](#) below).

- UTLAs in Tier 3: Very High Alert, Tier 4: Stay at Home, or national lockdown were eligible to receive funding of £4 per head of population per 28 days in those restrictions
- UTLAs in Tier 2: High Alert were eligible to receive funding of £2 per head of population per 28 days in those restrictions
- those authorities in Tier 1: Medium Alert were not eligible for regular funding

## **Allocation of funding from 5 November to 1 December 2020 – national restrictions**

During this period of national restrictions, the COMF committed to paying all English UTLAs up to the maximum of £8 per head of population, inclusive of funds already provided under the previous criteria.

LAs that moved into Local COVID Alert Level: Very High prior to the implementation of national restrictions on 5 November were eligible for a top-up payment from the COMF in recognition of the extended time those areas had been under the higher restrictions. The UTLAs who received these top-up payments had separate correspondence setting out the details.

## **Allocation of funding from 14 October to 4 November 2020 – Local Covid Alert Level (LCAL) system**

The LCAL system was introduced on 14 October 2020 and UTLAs were advised that they would be eligible for a series of payments from the COMF to support proactive containment and intervention measures. Funding given to a LA was cumulative per stage, and relative to funding already received. The level of funding provided was dependent upon an LA's LCAL:

- LAs in LCAL Medium were eligible for up to £1 per head of population
- LAs in LCAL High were eligible for up to £3 per head of population
- LAs in LCAL Very High were eligible for up to £8 per head of population

A letter sent to all English LA chief executives on 19 October 2020 provided a non-exhaustive list of funding activities COMF monies could be used for. This can be found in [appendix C](#) below.



## **Allocation of funding from 1 July to 13 October 2020**

Between these dates, supplementary funding was available from the £100 million held in the COMF at the time. Grants were given to UTLAs and lower-tier local authorities (LTLAs) that were deemed as areas of intervention or enhanced support. In the period up to and including 13 October 2020, some payments were made on a discretionary basis to honour previously agreed financial support that had been committed from the COMF. This may have led to differences in the level of per capita support provided in some areas. Bringing in LCALs ensured a fair and consistent approach was taken between different areas.

## **Allocation of funding in June 2020 – Test and Trace Support Service Grant**

£300 million was distributed to English LAs from the Test and Trace Support Service Grant toward the expenditure lawfully incurred in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19.

It was intended that this funding would enable LAs to:

- develop and implement tailored local COVID-19 outbreak control plans
- fund the recruitment of public health officials should additional resource be required
- contract with delivery partners to assist in the control of local outbreaks

This grant was a one-off payment using the 2020 to 2021 Public Health Grant allocations formula as a basis for proportionately distributing the funding. UTLAs were informed of the conditions relating to the grant within the Section 31 grant determination letters. No application was required for this funding. The detail of this can be found in [appendix D](#) and [appendix E](#) below.

## **3. Monitoring and evaluation**

In December 2020, LAs were informed of the need to return monthly monitoring forms detailing the allocation of spending from the COMF against the 10 criteria outlined in the letter dated 1 December 2020. This was a primary condition placed on LAs in order to receive future funding. A template of the monitoring form was sent with the letter dated 1 December 2020. This form is to be completed monthly and returned to [covid-19LAFundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:covid-19LAFundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk).

The information collated from these forms was used to review with HM Treasury the ongoing provision of the COMF. It is a requirement that all LAs return forms between January and March 2021 prior to the release of funds from the COMF in the financial year 2021 to 22.

## **Appendix A: current COMF funding policy**

## **What is the purpose of this funding, and are there any restrictions?**

The COMF was extended to provide monthly payments to LAs facing higher restrictions, subject to a review with HM Treasury in January 2021.

This funding is available to support LAs with costs incurred by restrictions and is designed to assist authorities deliver their non-pharmaceutical interventions and their COVID-19 response.

The monthly payments from the COMF can be used for public health purposes in relation to COVID-19, working to break the chain of transmission and protecting the most vulnerable.

This may include activities such as:

- targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups
- additional contact tracing
- enhanced communication and marketing
- additional support for compliance and enforcement

LA chief executives are expected to work in coordination with the Director of Public Health to determine the necessary activities.

LAs can carry money allocated from the COMF in the financial year 2020 to 2021 into the next financial year.

## **Is this scheme UK-wide?**

It is available to all LAs within England. Funding has mainly been given to UTLAs.

## **Why are LAs in Tier 1 Medium Alert not eligible for monthly funding?**

All LAs were allocated up to £8 per head of population funding (inclusive of funding already provided) from the COMF when England moved into national restrictions on 5 November.

## **Do I have to send an application to receive this funding?**

There is no application required for LAs to receive the funding.

The primary condition on this funding is agreement that LAs eligible to receive it provide information to Contain regarding how funds received from the COMF have been allocated to date.

Information regarding the monitoring expectations has been shared to LAs on 1 December 2020.

## **When will LAs receive the monthly payments?**

Payments will be made at the end of a 28-day reference period.

For those LAs that move tier within the 28 days, the amount they will receive will be calculated on a pro-rata basis based on the number of days out of the 28 they were in each tier.

Population data for each LA is taken from the ONS 2019 mid-year population estimate, the latest population data available to us.

## **Is there any guidance on funding that should be passed on to the LTLAs?**

In 2-tier authority areas, the monthly funding will be provided to UTLAs on the expectation that they work closely with their lower-tier partners and ensure those partners are given opportunities to deliver the outcomes this funding is meant to support where delivery by those partners would be the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivery.

In those cases, it is essential that UTLAs provide sufficient resources to LTLAs within the former's allocated funding so that the latter can carry out any responsibilities that they are asked to undertake.

## **What population data are you using to work this out?**

Population data is extracted from the mid-2019 ONS estimates, as is standard across NHS Test and Trace.

## **Appendix B: letter template dated 1 December 2020 sent to English LAs**

### **Update on funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund**

Dear local authority chief executives,

Let me begin by thanking you once again for all the work that you have done and continue to do to support your local communities during the COVID pandemic.

I am writing regarding changes to the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. As set out in the COVID-19 Winter Plan published on 23 November, the Contain Outbreak Management Fund will be increased so that it can provide regular payments to local authorities facing higher restrictions until the end of the financial year. This further funding recognises the ongoing public health and outbreak management costs of tackling COVID-19.



The details of this new funding policy are as set out below:

- upper-tier local authorities in Tier 3 will be eligible to receive funding of £4 per head of population per 28 days in those restrictions
- upper-tier local Authorities in Tier 2 will be eligible to receive funding of £2 per head of population per 28 days in those restrictions
- those authorities in Tier 1 will not be eligible for regular funding
- this funding will be made available from the end of national restrictions on 2 December until the end of this financial year, subject to a review in January 2021

In 2-tier authority areas, this funding will be provided on the expectation that upper-tier local authorities work closely with their lower-tier partners and ensure those partners are given opportunities to deliver the outcomes this funding is meant to support where delivery by those partners would be the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivery. In those cases, it is essential that upper-tier local authorities provide sufficient resources to lower-tier local authorities within the former's allocated funding so that the latter can carry out any responsibilities that they are asked to undertake.

Additionally, those local authorities that moved into Local COVID Alert Level: Very High prior to the implementation of national restrictions on 5 November will be eligible for a top-up payment from the Fund, in recognition of the extended time those areas have been under higher restrictions. The upper-tier local authorities due to receive these top-up payments will receive separate correspondence setting out the details.

The regular payments from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund can be used for public health purposes to tackle COVID-19. Whilst the specific public health activities that can be funded are subject to your judgement in coordination with your Director of Public Health, activities that this funding could be used to support may include:

- targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes
- additional contact tracing
- enhanced communication and marketing (for example, towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging)
- delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation
- targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces
- harnessing capacity within local sectors (for example, voluntary, academic, commercial)
- extension/introduction of specialist support (for example, behavioural science, bespoke comms)
- additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance
- targeted support for school/university outbreaks



- community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population
- support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives
- providing initial support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as clinically extremely vulnerable who are following tier 3 guidance

The primary condition on this funding is agreement, from eligible local authorities, to provide information to Contain regarding how funds received from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund have been allocated to date. This information will provide an invaluable insight into how the Fund is supporting your frontline activities in containing COVID-19 and will provide a key input into the review of the Fund that Contain will carry out with HMT and MHCLG in January 2021. The accompanying monitoring form sets out the format we would request this information is returned in. Please return this form by 21 December 2020 to [covid-19LAFundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:covid-19LAFundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk).

As the allocation of tiers succeeding national restrictions has now been made, upper-tier local authorities will receive confirmation of the regular funding, if any, they are eligible for alongside further details of the monitoring expectations shortly.

I trust that the availability of this further funding will provide the ongoing support to your critical role in the response to COVID-19.

Please email [covid-19LAFundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:covid-19LAFundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk) if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Carolyn Wilkins  
Director of Contain: NHS Test and Trace

CC: directors of public health, regional convenors

## **Appendix C: letter template dated 19 October 2020 sent to English LAs**

Dear local authority chief executives,

Thank you for your incredible efforts to mitigate the impacts of the COVID pandemic, as we seek to break the chains of transmission, protect our NHS and save lives. I appreciate these efforts carry a financial burden, so I am writing to inform you about changes to the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. This is a Department of Health and Social Care fund set up to support local authorities to carry out your responsibilities during this crisis.

Following the move to Local COVID Alert Levels, and as of 12 October 2020, local authorities will be eligible for a series of payments from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to support proactive containment and intervention measures:

- A payment of up to £1 per head of population will be provided to local authorities in Local COVID Alert Level Medium. This will be disbursed as soon as public health activities have been agreed with the relevant regional convenor
- Where local authorities move to Local COVID Alert Level High or Very High this financial support will automatically be increased to £3 per person and £8 per person respectively
- this funding is incremental, not additional
- funding is one-off. Repeated movement between Local Alert Levels will not enable reoccurring support from this fund
- funding will be paid to upper-tier local authorities, for onwards disbursement

Financial support for local authorities at Local COVID Alert Level Medium and High is to fund the following activities:

- targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes
- additional contact tracing
- enhanced communication and marketing – for example, towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging
- delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation
- targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces
- harnessing capacity within local sectors (voluntary, academic, commercial)
- extension/introduction of specialist support (behavioural science, bespoke comms)
- additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance

Financial support for local authorities at Local COVID Alert Level Very High has a broader scope, to support local economies and public health. We expect this to include activities such as (this list is not exhaustive):

- measures to support the continued functioning of commercial areas and their compliance with public health guidance
- funding military aid to the civil authorities (marginal costs only)
- targeted support for school/university outbreaks
- community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population
- support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives
- providing initial support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as clinically extremely vulnerable who are following tier 3 guidance
- support for rough sleepers

This list will likely evolve over time, with updated guidance provided on GOV.UK.

Local authorities should liaise with their contain regional convenor, JBC regional lead and MHCLG on the details of expenditure and the monitoring of outcomes.

This support is in addition to previous financial support that has been provided or formally committed from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. Furthermore, the Prime Minister confirmed that there would be a further package of support for local government, of around £1 billion, on Monday. Further details of this funding will be confirmed by MHCLG next week.

Please email [covid-19LAfundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:covid-19LAfundingrequests@dhsc.gov.uk) if you have any questions. Further guidance will be provided on GOV.UK in due course.

Yours faithfully, \ Carolyn Wilkins \ Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE \ Contain Divisional  
Director, NHS Test and Trace  
Chief Executive, Oldham Council  
Accountable Officer, NHS Oldham CCG

## **Appendix D: letter dated 23 May 2020 from Minister of State for Patient Safety**

From:

Nadine Dorries MP  
Minister of State for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

### **Local outbreak control plans**

Dear Council Leader,

Thank you for the excellent work that you, your teams and partners are doing to support the response to COVID-19. As we prepare to launch the Test and Trace service, you as leaders of local systems have a critical role to play to help contain the spread of the virus and enable a gradual return to a new normal so that local ambitions can be achieved. We are keen to support you in that local role, as an integral part of the national system.

Every part of the country will develop in June a local outbreak control plan and we look forward to working closely with 11 areas to share and spread good practice. These will be based on upper-tier local authority areas linked to public health responsibilities. Councils will need to fully involve NHS partners including GPs, as well as district councils in 2-tier areas, and will be able to collaborate across a larger geography if they so wish. We are delighted that government is backing local government with £300 million to develop and roll out these plans.



There is so much local expertise and activity already in place to build on. A briefing note and slide deck is attached to set the framework for the next phase of joint local and national delivery. Additional information will be provided in an online call to be scheduled next week.

I am looking forward to working with you in this joint endeavour.

Kind regards,

Nadine Dorries

## **Appendix E: briefing note on local outbreak management plans (formerly known as local government outbreak control plans)**

### **Local government outbreak control plans**

We will shortly be launching the Test and Trace service, which will form a central part of the government's COVID-19 recovery strategy. The primary objectives of the Test and Trace service will be to control the COVID-19 rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of infection and save lives, and in doing so help to return life to as normal as possible, for as many people as possible, in a way that is safe, protects our health and care systems and releases our economy.

Achieving these objectives will require a co-ordinated effort from local and national government, the NHS, GPs, businesses and employers, voluntary organisations and other community partners, and the general public. Local planning and response will be an essential part of the Test and Trace service, and local government has a central role to play in the identification and management of infection. Local government, NHS and other relevant local organisations will be at the heart of the programme as we support upper tier local authorities to develop local outbreak control plans. To that end, £300 million in national government funding will be provided to local authorities in England to develop and action their plans to reduce the spread of the virus in their area.

Building on the foundation of the statutory role of directors of public health at the upper-tier local authority level, and working with Public Health England's local health protection teams, local government will build on existing health protection plans to put in place measures to identify and contain outbreaks and protect the public's health. Local directors of public health will be responsible for defining these measures and producing the plans, working through COVID-19 health protection boards. They will be supported by and work in collaboration with Gold command emergency planning forums and a public-facing board led by council members to communicate openly with the public.

Cross-party and cross-sector working will be strongly encouraged, and all tiers of government will be engaged in a joint endeavour to contain the virus, including local resilience forums, NHS integrated care systems and mayoral combined



authorities. In 2-tier areas, district councils will be fully involved, particularly given their responsibilities for environmental health. Councils are free to work at wider geographic levels if they so choose.

Local plans should be centred around 7 themes:

1. Planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools (for example, defining monitoring arrangements, identifying potential scenarios and planning the required response).
2. Identifying and planning how to manage other high-risk places, locations and communities of interest including sheltered housing, dormitories for migrant workers, transport access points (for example, ports, airports), detained settings, rough sleepers etc (for example, defining preventative measures and outbreak management strategies).
3. Identifying methods for local testing to ensure a swift response that is accessible to the entire population. This could include delivering tests to isolated individuals, establishing local pop-up sites or hosting mobile testing units at high-risk locations (for example, defining how to prioritise and manage deployment).
4. Assessing local and regional contact tracing and infection control capability in complex settings (for example, Tier 1b) and the need for mutual aid (for example, identifying specific local complex communities of interest and settings, developing assumptions to estimate demand, developing options to scale capacity if needed).
5. Integrating national and local data and scenario planning through the Joint Biosecurity Centre playbook (for example, data management planning including data security, data requirements including NHS linkages).
6. Supporting vulnerable local people to get help to self-isolate (for example, encouraging neighbours to offer support, identifying relevant community groups, planning how to co-ordinate and deploy) and ensuring services meet the needs of diverse communities.
7. Establishing governance structures led by existing COVID-19 health protection boards and supported by existing Gold command forums and a new member-led board to communicate with the general public.

All upper-tier local authorities need to develop local outbreak control plans in June ahead of further phases of the national infection control framework. We will support this process by working intensively with 11 areas that will help to rapidly develop best practices and capture learnings. Local councils outside these areas will be invited to participate in regular engagement and best-practice sharing sessions that will commence in May.

In parallel, we will establish a National Outbreak Control Plans Advisory Board to draw on expertise from across local government and ensure the national Test and Trace programme builds on local capability, and to share best practice and inform future programme development.

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