

Q&A supporting recording of Grant monitoring 2019-20 and Applications 2020-21 webinar

Grant Monitoring form

Q. Please clarify the log in again please - thought it was the same user and password for both monitoring and application forms?

There is a different link to the monitoring and application forms, and you will need to set up a separate log in for each form so that they are kept separate and do not get confused with each other. The links are:

2020-21 - [Grant application form](#)

2019-20 [Grant monitoring form](#)

Q. We had some very last minute spend changes due to Covid-19, e.g. extra money for postage and printer ink as we had to send more out to snail mail to members than was planned. Is that OK as long as it is explained?

A. Yes, absolutely. This is fine and understandable, and the spend still meets the conditions of grant.

Q. Who, or what, prompts local area assessments?

All local areas will be inspected jointly by Ofsted and CQC to assess their progress in implementing the SEND reforms. The inspection process is due to be completed by the end of March 2021 (though this may be affected by the pandemic). The local area inspection timetable is set by Ofsted and CQC who will notify local areas, including the forum on a Monday morning of an inspection which will begin the following Monday. Your forum should be involved in the preparations for this. The same is true for revisits, though the notice period is usually 2 weeks. Revisits usually take place within approximately 18 months of the inspection.

Q. Sometimes the relationships part is difficult to answer, for instance you could co-produce things with a CCG, but not do well at all in other areas. So, would you choose the middle ground?

A. Choose the answer that best reflects your relationship with each partner, be honest. There is no right or wrong answer. Use the comments section to explain who you are working well with and where the challenges are. You can say which particular services that your forum is working well with, and who you might not have such a good relationship with.



Q. Bit concerned my scanned in POEs will be too big to email. Is there a way to squash them up to email?

A. We recommend that you upload the POEs to DropBox if possible, via the link on the monitoring form. You might also be able to scan in your POEs and convert to pdf files in batches to restrict the file size if you wish to email them. You could also send across in several emails. If you're still having difficulty, contact Ben Bennett and he will assist you.

Q. How will you work out how much money we have to account for next year if our underspend from 2019-20 is included?

A. We will approve the monitoring in the usual way and will agree a figure that can be signed off. We will then inform you of this figure when we write to you. This will be your under spend from 2019-20, plus your 2020-21 grant. If your forum's approved underspend was £3500 and you apply for the full £15,000 grant, the total you will need to account for at the end of the 2020-21 grant period will be £18,500.

Q. We are struggling to collate all the receipts and claim forms as we can't meet to pull them all together. Can we have an extension please?

A. Please contact Ben to discuss and arrange a new deadline date. We will do all we can to support and accommodate as we appreciate that circumstances are challenging for everyone.

Q. Does it (the form) have to be filled in in one go, or can it take a few days?

The online form is set up so that you can save your progress and re-enter the form as many times as you like before you submit it to Contact. As long as they have the log in details, any member of the forum can access and edit the form, but you might want to agree the content together using the pdf form and then one person can input the agreed text into the form and submit.

Q. We were mid inspection when the Covid-19 outbreak happened. How do we record this?

A. You could say that you have been involved in the preparation for inspection and indicate how this impacted on the forum, as the area will no doubt be inspected fully once the pandemic restrictions are eased.

Q. What is the Dropbox address please?

A. There is a link to the Dropbox within the online form and you can upload POEs directly.



Applications

There were some very similar questions regarding the underspend from 2019-20.

Q. Do you not have to say what you are planning to spend the underspend on to anyone?

Q. If the underspend is not to be included - how do we allocate activity/spend to this amount?

Q. We've applied for the full £15,000 but we will have an underspend from 2019-20, how will we know how much, and how will we account for it?

Q. Do you not have to say what you are planning to spend the underspend on to anyone?

A. When we approve your 2019-20 monitoring, we will write to you and advise you of the full amount of grant that you will need to account for in your 2020-21 grant monitoring in a year's time. This will be £15,000 plus whatever your underspend was. The DfE agreed that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, underspend could be carried over without it affecting how much grant you can claim this year. You will still need to spend it in-line with the Conditions of Grant, this might be on the activities that your forum was unable to complete from their approved application from the year before, or might be on things such as computer or virtual meeting software which would enable you to reach out and keep in touch with members, reach out further, link up, hold virtual catch-ups or coffee afternoons or drop-ins to reduce isolation and keep families connected – all of which would meet the conditions of the grant. If in any doubt that what you are thinking of spending your under spend on won't meet the CoG, check with your advisor. The DfE has agreed to greater flexibility of spend this year to account for Covid-19 sticking a big spanner in the works, this includes using the grant on things to help forums to stay connected, keep networking, reduce isolation etc. whilst strategic meetings are not the priority. They also appreciate that it is difficult to plan ahead at the moment. Plans can be changed later in the year if necessary. You will need to account for the full amount of grant including the underspend from 2019-20 in your 2020-21 grant monitoring.

Q. If a new PCF is being set up, do we need to complete the bank account form that Ben spoke about or can the application be completed as a new PCF?

A. The bank account form is for the DfE which goes to their finance department to run due diligence checks on the new forum or grant holder, to check it is a legitimate organisation. It can create delays as they can take 6 weeks to complete. So, yes, apply as a new forum, but try to get the form completed well in advance to minimise delays. The grants team can offer support with this.

Q. If we have a variety of other funding sources how do we add?

Put in the full amount of funding and answer who it comes from as best you can. You can always contact the grants team for guidance if you feel that your form's funding doesn't fit the categories listed.



Q. What about 2020-21 underspend? i.e. if lockdown/ social distancing extends well into this FY meaning that planned spend doesn't happen again?

It is currently unknown how long this might go on for, but the DfE as the grant funder is full understanding of this. Contact and the NNPCF will liaise with the DfE throughout the year to inform them of how the pandemic is affecting forums and their ability to use the grant. We will keep forums informed of any decisions made or any changes/further flexibility as and when they arise. Forums may wish to use their grant in different ways this year to concentrate on their digital infrastructure, online and social media/website presence rather than putting on events until the lockdown and social distancing are eased.

Q. Does the local authority receive a copy of our grant application?

A. No – they sign the MOU to state that they will recognise the DfE funded forum as their strategic partner and will work in co-production with them – as the forum also signs the reciprocal MOU.

Q. What did you mean in the grant email about being creative with the grant this year?

A. The DfE recognises that due to the pandemic, school closures and the lockdown that parent carer forums may not be able to operate in the same way for the foreseeable future until things return to some semblance of normality. This means that strategic meetings may not be a priority but keeping in touch with families in your areas and reducing isolation amongst the vulnerable or seldom head families may become your focus for a while; therefore the DfE is happy for forums to use the grant on IT infrastructure, on communication software such as virtual meeting technology to enable you to network and keep in contact, gather views and feed in to services and the NNPCF how the pandemic is affecting families in your area. You might want to have virtual coffee afternoons and drop-in sessions and change the way that you communicate. If you are unsure whether your plans will meet the CoG, please discuss with your advisor.

Q. We had a discretionary grant last year but you're saying that there might not be one this year, or that it will only be available later in the year, why is this?

A. Due to the DfE allowing the carry forward of underspend from 2019-20 into 2020-21, there will inevitably be a reduced underspend pot this financial year. However, forums who due to having more money from underspend, and who do not require the full amount in their second tranche claim by the time they come to claim it, may contribute to the build-up of some underspend accrual for the discretionary pot – we will not know how much money will be available until forums have made their second tranche claims, therefore we cannot say for sure what will be available for discretionary grants. We don't want to raise hopes at this stage that this money will be available, or for forums to rely on it being there and then find that it isn't.

Q. Should we still allow some money in our budget this year for the annual conference?



A. Yes - nobody knows how long the lockdown will last for or whether we will be able to book a conference once it ends as venues may be full for a while accommodating events that were cancelled in March, but please do include some money for this. It might be that we have to move the conference 2021 instead of late 2020. If we're still in the current situation, we may need to consider virtual conference options. If a physical conference does not go ahead, forums will be able to reallocate any money put aside for members to attend, to another budget heading.

Q. Are you sending out an email to forums about our priorities e.g. reducing social isolation? Last one received was more about not changing the remit (engagement)

A. We already did on 20th March, see excerpt below:

“The DfE has urged us to keep in touch, keep the communication channels open and inform them of issues and solutions as and when they arise. We have discussed that the way that forums work may need to change or cease temporarily in this period of uncertainty. The DfE asks that forums are creative with their grants to find new ways of keeping in touch with each other and with local strategic partners. It might be that forums will prioritise investing in technology and digital meeting and webinar software and to put this in their grant applications for 2020-21. This will enable forums to keep in touch with each other and with their wider members and offer online engagement and also a reduction of isolation amongst parent carers. Some forums are already maximising the use of online meetings, social media and the NNPCF will be setting up regional online meeting facilities in due course to enabling forum networking and peer support”.

Strategic work will not be forums' main priority at the moment and the DfE are happy for forums to use the grant to keep in touch with families, members and to reduce isolation in local areas. However, we did stress that forums should not be pressured into becoming an advice service. You might want to signpost families to credible sources of support, but it is not the forums' job to produce or provide this information, unless you are working with local partners to co-produce family friendly information which is then disseminated. We will be sending out another newsletter soon to stress this again and hope to put on a webinar or webchat for forums to discuss and share their ideas and plans.

Q. You talk about being creative with infrastructure, can Contact suggest any good systems, or is there a possibility of group purchasing to make it more affordable?

Contact can only give an opinion on the Software and systems that we have used, such as GotoMeeting which we use for our own online meetings. We are aware that forums use a variety of other platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc. We are hoping to arrange a webinar or series of online chats in the coming weeks where forums can learn from each other what systems they have been using. Regions are purchasing GotoMeeting software to arrange regional catch ups and networking – you do not need to purchase the licence to join these meetings. Many online platforms are currently offering free licences for a period of one month, or 90 days during the pandemic, we believe that GotoMeeting is offering 9 days free access to



their software. Forums could take advantage of free use for now until it becomes clearer how much longer the restrictions and lockdown will last. Forums might want to purchase equipment to enable them to access the free software such as laptops or tablets. If forums wish to club together to purchase software to make it more affordable, that is something that you can arrange between you and at the end of the year each claim a proportion back via the DfE grant. You will each need to submit the POE for this at the end of the year in your individual monitoring forms and state the proportion of the split.