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Kathryn Cobain
Director of Public Health
Worcestershire County Council
By email

4 June 2020

Dear Kathryn

Re WCC Care Home Support Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the final draft WCC Care Home Support Plan, which we appreciate was submitted to the DHSC as per the 29th May 2020 deadline.

Nevertheless, we have taken this opportunity to respond to the Plan in order to raise some questions and issues that will be relevant to residents and their families.

We would also refer you to our letter of 30th April 2020 (to which we are awaiting a response), which we hope was taken account of in the preparation of the Plan. We have some comments and questions on the Plan as set out in the covering letter and on the template return.

WORCESTERSHIRE'S COVID-19 CARE HOME SUPPORT PLAN

Joint work to ensure care market resilience locally

The Plan states that: "Worcestershire has a well-established system plan to ensure care market resilience and to support providers in the key areas of infection prevention and control (IPC), testing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), workforce and clinical support, as well as a system of financial support to safeguard providers' financial viability."

Could you please clarify:

1. Is the established system plan a written document and could this be shared?
2. How are residents and families made aware of the measures that have been and are being taken in respect of managing the Covid-19 pandemic, given that this may provide some reassurance to residents and their friends and families?



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We note and are pleased to see the examples of specific areas of action outlined in this section. We note that: “Procurement, storage and distribution of PPE stock via an online request system providing either same day or next day delivery of emergency PPE free of charge”; “Roll-out of iPads to all care homes in Worcestershire, enabling online GP consultations and the use of technology to reduce social isolation” and “Proactive support for the mental health and wellbeing of care home managers and deputy managers” are referenced.

Can you please clarify:

3. Does the reference to PPE stores and distribution apply to emergency supplies only?
4. If so can you confirm how arrangements are being made by the Local Authority, and its partners, to ensure that PPE is available to care and nursing home and domiciliary care staff, and that supplies are sufficient to meet Government Guidance and ensure the safety of residents, patients, service users and staff? This is a question that we raised in our letter to you of 30/04/2020
5. Can you confirm that all care and nursing home settings now have access to iPads for GP consultations?
6. Is there any mental health and well-being support available to care home staff other than managers?
7. How are residents in care and nursing home settings being provided with additional support for their mental health and emotional wellbeing, given the additional strain generated by the Covid-19 pandemic? This is a question that we raised in our letter to you of 30/04/2020

Worcestershire’s collective level of confidence that these actions are being implemented

Can you please clarify:

8. Are the Council or its partners hearing any concerns about ongoing care and support for residents and their families?

The local approach to providing alternative accommodation and care arrangements where required

We note that you state that: “Alternative accommodation and care is currently being targeted as required on a case by case basis, for example through the provision of additional 1-1 staffing support for up to 14 days in homes so that residents can isolate with guidance. It is intended that this offer will be extended and offered more proactively moving forwards.”

9. Could you please help us to understand more about what this entails? Is this support available to those who have tested positive for Covid-19 to enable them to remain in the setting? Is it used to support people who have tested positive for Covid-19 and are being discharged back to the care home from hospital?
10. Can you explain how the offer will be extended and offered more proactively moving forward?

Local co-ordination for placing returning clinical staff or volunteers into care homes

We note that: “Clinical staff returning to practice and other clinical volunteers have been supported to align with local health providers. Care home providers have been informed of the resource available and can draw down on this as required.” and “those homes which have requested support have been matched up with volunteers through the Here 2 Help programme”

Can you please clarify:

11. The number of clinical staff and clinical volunteers returning to practice in Worcestershire?
12. Can you please explain more about how this alignment works in practice? Does this mean for example that nursing home settings are able to draw down nursing staff into their setting should this be required on a temporary basis?
13. How many homes have asked for support through the Here 2 Help programme?

Template

We note that the information on the template is based on returns at 29th May 2020. You state that: “98% of care homes in Worcestershire are registered on the Tracker and approximately 70% of these have completed this new dataset at the date of writing”. We also note that on the first sheet (Care Home Support Implementation Status) the total number of CQC registered care homes is given as 179. On the second sheet (infection Control Implementation Status) Number of Care Homes is given as 186.

14. Can you please explain the reason for the difference in care home numbers?
15. Can you outline what plans are in place to ensure that all care homes are registered on the tracker and completing the returns?

Some of the numbers in the return are surprising in the light of the narrative in the Plan. In particular:

- 1.3) Paying staff full wages while isolating following a positive test (46)
- 2.2) Access to testing for all asymptomatic residents and staff (64)
- 2.3) Testing of all residents discharged from hospital to care homes (79)
- 4.3) Access to additional capacity including from locally coordinated returning healthcare professionals or volunteers (85)

We have noted the explanations provided in the spreadsheet.

16. We would welcome further assurance that care homes are fully aware of the support / resources available in respect of these issues.

On two related issues:

People with learning disabilities

Figures published by CQC on 2nd June 2020 show a significant increase in deaths of people with a learning disability because of COVID-19.

17. Are there plans in place to provide additional priority or support to homes and services for people with learning disability and autism in the light of the CQC figures?

People with Personal Budgets / Direct Payments

18. What arrangements have been made to ensure that people with personal budgets / direct payments are able to access information, advice, testing and supplies of PPE and other relevant equipment during this pandemic period?

We look forward to a response to our letter of 30/04/2020 as soon as possible (a reply was requested by 25th May, but we understand that this was delayed by technical issues with the email).

Please can you respond to the points raised in this letter by **Friday 3 July 2020**. If you wish to discuss the content of this letter please can you contact Margaret Reilly, our officer lead for Adult Social Care in the first instance. Margaret can be contacted by email at mreilly@healthwatchworcestershireshire.co.uk or telephone 01386 565951.

Given the importance of this information it would be helpful to have an informed discussion at a forthcoming meeting of the Health and Well-Being Board.

Yours Sincerely



Peter Pinfield,
Chair
Healthwatch Worcestershire

c.c. Fran Kelsey, Worcestershire County Council