

Our Ref: KC/ns  
3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

Mr Peter Pinfield  
Chair, Healthwatch Worcestershire  
Civic Centre  
Queen Elizabeth Drive  
Pershore  
WR10 1PT

Dear Mr Pinfield,

**Re: Worcestershire Care Home Support Plan**

Thank you for your letter of 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020 in response to the publication of Worcestershire's Care Home Support Plan. I am pleased to respond to your questions as below. Please also refer to our letter of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020 which also contains further information pertinent to some of your questions.

*1. Is the established system plan a written document and could this be shared?*

In line with the request from the Department of Health and Social Care, the covering letter and template published on 29<sup>th</sup> May make up Worcestershire's Care Home Support Plan. The covering letter includes an appendix (Annex A) which sets out the terms of reference for the Worcestershire Care Home Hub and the role of the system partners in implementing care home support.

*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?*

Care homes are communicating frequently with residents and families, for example through newsletters, social media and 1-1 communication on a regular basis. There has also been a significant amount of wider communication by the Council and its partners.

For example, the Coronavirus webpages on the council website include a significant amount of information, while the Here 2 Help website and telephone service provide an effective communications channel with the general public in Worcestershire. Senior leaders in Adult Social Care have recorded videos to highlight the work that is being done and to reassure people that the council is doing everything it can to keep people safe. A number of press releases have been issued, highlighting the great work of staff working across adult social care settings. These included messages about how health and social care partners have been working closely with providers, with specific examples such as the work to co-ordinate PPE etc. Messaging on social media such as Facebook and Twitter have echoed these messages.

*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?*

Providers are proactively encouraged to source PPE from their own suppliers and to hold at least 4-6 weeks stock. In the majority of cases, this means that providers can meet their own needs. However, the Council will continue to support all providers who have urgent PPE needs and where they are unable to purchase from commercial suppliers.

As referenced in our letter of 15<sup>th</sup> June, following the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent guidance issued by Public Health England, demand for PPE dramatically increased placing unprecedented demand on the existing UK stock and distribution network. The Council had to step into the normal supply arrangements and secure items from other sources to ensure that care services and other key worker activities could continue safely.

As a first and immediate response to the issue, the Council sourced and procured external (non-government source) PPE stock (masks, gloves, aprons, eye protection, hand sanitizer) in order to support demand from WCC staff and care providers. A storage and distribution hub were set up and an online request system implemented providing either same day or next day delivery of emergency PPE where requests were validated. Emergency PPE is currently being provided free of charge. Over 500,000 items have been distributed to date.

To date, we have had 151 individual requests from 96 care homes and 149 individual requests from 89 home care providers and continue to provide a safety net of supply where providers are unable to source PPE.

*5. Can you confirm that all care and nursing home settings now have access to iPads for GP consultations?*

Yes, we can confirm that this is the case.

*6. Is there any mental health and well-being support available to care home staff other than managers?*

Resilience sessions are being offered to managers and deputies. As part of the session, trainers talk about how the managers and deputies can support their staff, to enable them to cascade this training to their staff. Along with a copy of the training slide set, they are provided with a workbook to distribute to staff to enable them to work through and do the recommended exercises.

Here 2 Help (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help>) also includes lots of mental health guidance, available for everyone to access.

*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*

Please see the response given in our letter of 15th June 2020.

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

The Council's Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Teams work very closely with the Quality Team in the CCG and have together continued to manage any concerns received through our standard processes throughout the pandemic.

- *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?*

There are a range of ways in which care homes are being supported to ensure effective infection control measures are in place. The recently announced Infection Control Grant received from government, of which 75% has been passed direct to care homes, has enabled homes themselves to implement a range of additional measures. Examples include ensuring that members of staff work in only one care home, limiting or cohorting staff to individual groups of residents, including cohorting COVID-19 positive residents, and supporting the active recruitment of additional staff if they are needed to enable staff to work in only one care home or to work only with an assigned groups of residents, for example.

The availability of the Infection Control funding has meant that additional 1-1 staffing provided by the Council and its partners has not routinely been required; this support is therefore targeted specifically where needs arise. For example, in one setting for people with complex needs, where isolation was difficult, a specialist domiciliary care agency were contracted to provide overnight support.

*11. Can you please clarify 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?*

In total, around 80 clinical staff volunteered to return to practice in Worcestershire, including nurses, pharmacists and GPs. These staff have mainly been utilised by the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, as well as by Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. In the small number of instances where care home providers have faced an urgent need for additional nursing staff support, this has been co-ordinated by Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, working with health providers, to source appropriate staff as required on a needs-led basis.

*13. How many homes have asked for support through the Here 2 Help programme?*

All homes are able to receive support directly through the proactive calls which are made at least weekly, under the umbrella of the Care Homes Hub (as outlined in the Care Home Support Plan). This means that homes have a named contact officer in the Council's (residential homes) or the CCG's (nursing homes) quality teams.

The Care Home Hub has also worked with Here 2 Help colleagues on specific tailored support offers, for example to offer resilience training and a recently launched pilot befriending scheme. 70 homes have to date taken up the offer for Managers/Deputy Managers to attend resilience training. Seven

homes have taken up the offer under the pilot befriending scheme, of which two have already started the scheme with regular contact between the resident and volunteers, and another one is just in the process of matching volunteers to residents.

*14. 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. Can you please explain the reason for the difference in care home numbers?*

The national Care Home Tracker contains information about all Worcestershire-based care homes, based on CQC registrations. However, there are seven homes included in the database which are permanently closed. The number of active care homes in Worcestershire is therefore 179. This has been reported and it is hoped will be corrected for future iterations of the national capacity tracking information database.

*15. Can you outline what plans are in place to ensure that all care homes are registered on the tracker and completing the returns?*

Care homes are encouraged to submit data regularly to the tracker as part of the proactive calls which are made and have also been assisted with queries, they might have about the data required and meaning of some of the questions. There are also conditions included in the Infection Control Grant which state that homes will only receive their second tranche of funding (due July 2020) if they are submitting information on a regular basis.

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

As mentioned above, all care homes are contacted regularly by members of the Care Home Hub; this enables a two-way discussion where providers are able to highlight any concerns or queries, and adult social care and health partners are able to communicate the latest advice and guidance, for example in relation to infection control measures. In addition, regular updates are sent via email to all care homes, and all providers are also encouraged to use the resources available via the Coronavirus pages of the Council's website, which are also regularly updated.

*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?*

From the point of view of quality assuring services, safeguarding adults in services and ensuring effective infection control, the same processes of risk assessment and resulting actions are applied to all services irrespective of the group of individuals for whom the service is providing care and support.

*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?*

Letters were sent to all recipients of direct payments at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, to communicate the support available, and how to access information, advice and support. In relation specifically to PPE, as well as receiving information about how to access supplies themselves, people in receipt of direct payments are also able to access the Council's supplies in the same way as other

providers, as outlined above, and there are a number of examples where individuals have received equipment via this route

Please do not hesitate to come back to me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Cobain', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Dr Kathryn Cobain**  
Director of Public Health