

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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COVID-19 SUPPORT TO CARE HOMES

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Summary

This report provides a summary of relevant data and intelligence and the support provided to care homes to date as well as a copy of a letter and care home support plan submitted to the Minister of Care on 29 May 2020.

1. Budget and policy framework
 - 1.1 Local Government responsibilities for the delivery of Adult Social Care are set out within the Care Act. This includes responsibilities to support the market of social care providers, including requirements to support the sustainability of the market.
2. Background
 - 2.1 As a result of COVID-19, Care Homes face a number of specific challenges. National data as at 14 May showed that 33% of care homes nationally have had outbreaks of COVID-19.
 - 2.2 As a result of the specific risks to residents and staff in Care Homes, the Minister for Social Care has written to Local Authority Chief Executives, asking them to co-ordinate a support plan for all care homes.
 - 2.3 This paper summarises the support that has been provided to date, and includes a copy of the recently submitted care home support plan.

3. Summary of current situation and support provided to date

3.1 Data and Intelligence

From early in the outbreak, we began collecting regular data/intelligence from care homes to ensure we have a clear picture of any challenges, and are able to provide responsive support to help resolve any issues. The main areas covered by the returns include:

- Number of COVID positive or symptomatic residents
- Availability of PPE
- Availability of staffing
- Impact of any of the above, or any other issues, requiring further support from the local authority
- Views on the quality of information being provided by the local authority to support providers

3.2 A daily e-mail bulletin is being sent to all providers providing advice, guidance and links to any relevant information.

3.3 We have held a virtual provider forum meeting during the pandemic, and direct feedback from our providers has been positive about the support that has been provided. We have been in regular contact with the regional CQC lead to ensure that intelligence is shared and acted upon as appropriate. Our local Healthwatch contacted a number of local Care Homes to check how they were coping during the pandemic, and reported a summary of their findings on their website, which confirmed that those they spoke to felt well supported by the Council. The link below outlines their findings:
<https://www.healthwatchmedway.com/news/2020-04-24/great-see-support-medway-care-homes>

3.4 More recently, NHSE and CQC have started to collect regular information from all social care providers, including care homes. The submission of data through this route has recently been mandated as a condition for receipt of the additional infection control funding announced by government.

3.5 Where any provider reports issues either via our local situation report (sit-rep) report or the national return, immediate action is taken to contact the provider and to support them to resolve their issues.

3.6 We have well established arrangements in place to provide responsive support to providers via Partnership Commissioning, with support from the Quality Assurance team. This support covers any issues that have the potential to impact on operational delivery of services. This includes the regular collection of sit-rep information, clear communication channels for providers to contact the council to raise concerns, proactive contact to any homes reporting issues via sit-rep reporting.

- 3.7 Care providers have been encouraged to access PPE through their normal supply chains. Routes to support homes with additional PPE are now well established through the LRF. We have been able to secure mutual aid supplies of PPE for any provider that has needed them, and are not aware of any issues where a provider has had inadequate stocks of PPE to be able to safely undertake their work.
- 3.8 Data on outbreaks in homes is also sent to the Director of Public Health on a daily basis, and this is shared with commissioners to enable them to contact homes following notification of an outbreak to identify any operational support requirements. The following table summarises the cumulative position as at 13 May 2020.

Kent Surrey and Sussex	Brighton & Hove	East Sussex	Kent	Medway	Surrey	West Sussex
12 May	1	0	2	0	0	1
Cumulative	36	85	136	21	182	133
Restricted admissions*	11	24	41	4	41	27

- 3.9 The above table shows that there have been a cumulative total of 21 outbreaks in Medway care homes. Please note that an outbreak was initially defined by a home with a minimum of 2 cases. Public Health England (PHE) has recently changed its definition of an outbreak in a care home to a single case.
- 3.10 The above data means that 28% of homes in Medway have had outbreaks, compared to the national average of 33% that was reported in the letter from the minister.
- 3.11 Old age has been identified as the greatest risk factor associated with mortality related to COVID-19. Given their age and vulnerability (potentially having a number of underlying health conditions that increase their risk), residents of care homes are more likely to die as a result of COVID-19 infection than younger people living in the community. The type of residents a home cares for also has a bearing on risk. Public Health England, working with the CQC and NHSE, are currently in the process of reviewing deaths in care homes. This work is focused on homes where the rate of deaths exceeds that which should be expected. It is important to note that Medway has a significantly lower overall rate of COVID-19 related deaths in Care Homes than neighbouring local authorities. The public health department is working with PHE and will report back on this work, once there is a proper understanding of any specific local factors that might lead to an increased risk of mortality in local care homes.
- 3.12 Regular data and information on occupancy levels within care homes for older people and available beds is routinely captured, and this was in place pre-COVID. This allows us to make a comparison between the number of beds available in the system pre-COVID and during COVID.

- 3.13 The following data is provided to give an indication of the impact of COVID on occupancy levels, but is based on unvalidated data returns from providers.
- 3.14 The reported number of care home beds for older people in Medway is 1167. The number of vacancies reported on 3 March 2020 was 58 (5%), by 14 May 2020, the number of vacancies had increased to 99 (8.5%).
- 3.15 The increase in the number of vacancies is likely to be the result of a number of factors, including:
- reduction in hospital attendances/admissions with the knock on impact of reduced discharges requiring ongoing care and support
 - increase in families providing support to family members with care and support needs at home with reduced demand for community admissions to care homes
 - Increased mortality risk as outlined in paragraph 3.12.
- 3.16 Death rates in care homes are falling. Robust action will be taken should the death rate in care homes increase. The development of a care home support plan for Medway, will ensure appropriate engagement and interaction between all partners to help to reduce avoidable mortality in care homes.
- 3.17 As lockdown measures are lifted, we anticipate a potential increase in demand as people increasingly seek support for needs that have been met in alternative ways during the COVID pandemic, and as the number of people requiring medical support also increase.
- 3.18 Financial support
- The principles of financial support to care homes and other providers were communicated to care homes on 27 March 2020. The principles of this approach are that we will fund additional COVID related costs and ensure prompt payment of invoices.
- 3.19 In addition, specific arrangements have been put in place to financially support providers whose services have had to stop due to social distancing arrangements, particularly day care providers.
- 3.20 The government recently announced additional funding of £600m nationally to support care home providers with improved infection control arrangements. Medway Council's share of the funding will be £2,091,910.
- 3.21 There are strict conditions around the use of this funding with 75% of the funding to be passed directly to care homes. The other 25% is to be used at the discretion of the local authority in support of the Adult Social Care provider sector in the adoption of effective infection control arrangements.
- 3.22 One of the conditions of funding is that care homes must complete the national capacity tracker.

3.23 It is proposed that Medway's proportion of the governments £600m Infection Control Fund for care homes, will be distributed as follows:

- 75% Residential Care Homes
- 20% Supported Living and Homecare Providers
- 5% Contingency for targeted intervention with specific providers

4. Care Home Support Plan

4.1 The Social Care Minister recently wrote to Local Authority Chief Executive Officers asking them to work with system partners (including at a minimum Director of Adult Social Care, Director of Public Health and CCG Accountable Officer) to submit a care home support plan by 29th May 2020 consisting of

- a letter that sets out a short overview of their current activity and forward plan;
- a short template that should confirm the current level of access to the support offer. This template asks for confirmation of the number of care homes in your area where these commitments are being delivered, including homes that the local authority does not directly commission from, as well as details of issues and support needs; and
- confirmation that local authorities are carrying out a daily review of the local care market (including all relevant data, especially on care homes), and taking actions immediately where necessary to support them.

4.2 A copy of Medway Council's Care Home Support Plan is included with this report as Appendix 1 and 1a.

4.3 It should be noted that the requirement to develop and submit a care home support plan has taken significant officer time, given the short timescale for completion. This has had a negative impact on our stretched resources, whilst dealing with the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

5. Risk management

5.1 The production of a care home support plan is intended to mitigate the risk of poor infection control in care homes, which could lead to an increased number of outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes.

6. Financial and legal implications

6.1 Additional funding has been provided to Local Authorities to manage the impact of COVID-19, with Adult Social Care specified as a priority service for the use of funding. This funding is being used to fund COVID related costs only and does not represent a long term commitment to increase provider funding.

- 6.2 We have written to Adult Social Care providers to set out the arrangements that have put in place to support them with any financial issues.
- 6.3 Paragraphs 3.20 to 3.23 set out proposals for the allocation of Medway's share of the recently announced infection control funding.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 That Members note the support provided to care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the detailed arrangements set out in the Care Home Support Plan.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Response letter to Care Minister, including details of financial support provided, 29/05/20

Appendix 1a – Care home support tracker, 29/05/20

Background papers

Letter from Care Minister – 14/05/20