

Wessex Care Briefing 10 (17/12/21)

Following Director's review of Pandemic guidance and winter challenges ahead we felt it was important to provide an early additional briefing.

In light of the NHS England declaring a Level 4 National Incident we have decided to step up our specialist COVID briefings for all employees as we will be doing for all residents and their kinship relations. For those who were not with us during the last two COVID infection spikes this is what we did before and received overwhelming support and appreciation for keeping everyone in the loop and as up to date as possible. One of the defining issues we have faced in the past is the disconnect between governmental announcements and our ability to implement changes when they have not produced the legal guidance we need to follow. So again, for those of you that have not been through this before, with us, there will be and is always an enforced lag between government announcements and changes we can actually make. This is completely out of our control but we will expedite as much as we can.

Therefore, as a case in point, the announcement about changes to resident kinship visiting rules announced at the tail end of last week, we received the guidance yesterday. Below is a brief outline of what will be implemented from Monday but we will be resending visiting forms to request new information required.

Changes to visiting arrangements

From Monday 20th the following changes will be made for visitors of all residents (this does not include professionals):

- Residents will be restricted to 3 consistent visitors only (excluding any assigned 'essential care giver') (this does not include pre-school age children)
- Visitors must call the home where possible 24 hours prior to visit to book in to ensure the home does not have too many visitors in one day/time.
- Visits should be no more than 30 minutes at a time, unless the relative is an essential care giver (an essential care giver should be having on top of the LFD test before arrival a weekly PCR test, and changing into scrubs on arrival)
- Proof of LFD test on the day of visit must be checked
- Proof of double vaccination and booster must be given on entry. Any relatives who have not had the double vaccination and booster must wear a FFP2 mask, they must also maintain a 1 metre social distanced visit.
- Outward visits – residents are not to attend highly populated areas when out and about, the residents and people they are with should where possible continue to wear face coverings and maintain good hand hygiene. When the resident returns to the home if they are doubly vaccinated and had the booster, they do not have to isolate but they must have an LFD test daily for 7 days. If an unvaccinated resident or a resident who has not had the booster comes back from an outward visit, they must isolate in their bedroom for 14 days, with 7-day testing of LFD followed by a PCR test at the end of the 7 days.

What we know about the new Omicron variant

- Significantly more infectious than the Delta variant, therefore, spreads very rapidly particularly in groups.
- Rapid onset from being infected to being infectious.
- Booster vaccinated people have significantly more protection than Double vaccinated even if they have had COVID previously.

We are experienced, knowledgeable and prepared for this spike, better than we have ever been before. We know what works to reduce the transmission and the viral load in our buildings and in our community work.

- Absolute adherence to quality Infection Prevention Control & Personal Protection Equipment (IPC & PPE) standards- it's everyone's responsibility to lead by example at all times, to teach and positively guide and reassure consistently, particularly with new people to our services whether employees or kinship visitors.
- Adherence to personal hygiene rules, washing hands and use of alcohol gel. Not visiting if you or anyone in your household is feeling unwell in any way.
- Surface cleaning from touch areas to general areas, relentless cleaning by all staff.
- Air venting, decontamination with fogging and UV-C air filtration units
- Beyond deep cleaning with the use of UV-C decontamination robots.
- Strict adherence to the donning and doffing of PPE, maintaining distance with others when without a mask during drinking and eating.
- Disinfecting all packages that arrive in the homes before they are distributed.
- Vaccination & Test: high percentage of all staff are doubly and booster vaccinated and being tested regularly, as are all visitors.
- It's everyone's responsibility to help each other by supportively challenging any complacency.

Therefore, today our armoury and approach of preventative measures is well resourced and rehearsed. It is a layered approach which requires all layers from front line cleanliness to sophisticated UV-C technology to all work properly and in harmony to best protect our residents, staff and visitors.

All leaders within the Wessex Care family have a fundamental responsibility to role model best practice at all times to ensure the IPC & PPE messages are properly and consistently presented and applied in a positive, can do, moral enhancing approach. We have all been through this before when we had limited knowledge, experience or kit so we are perfectly able to calmly and professionally manage this again.

Staffing pressures: we will inevitably have times when staff have to self-isolate, as before, we are relatively well staffed compared to many providers and continue to recruit and block book agency where we can and above our requirements. You will be aware there is a national shortage of Nurses and Healthcare Assistance. However, all homes start from a staffing position that is significantly above what is required based on our dependency monitoring and therefore there is, without

additional staff, significant room to manage. Jodie Scot (Operations Director) & Jo McMahon (Service Manager) are absolutely dedicated to ensuring we maintain a safe level of staffing at all times.

Reaction Times: It is absolutely vital that because of the highly infectious nature of this variant our reaction time to concerns, positive tests etc is very fast in implementing mitigation actions to reduce potential spread i.e., resident's isolation in rooms, podding where possible, closing to visitors, admissions and discharges, deep cleaning and decontamination, venting of buildings etc.

What more are we, will we be doing:

- New air decontamination units for every bedroom except Milford Manor where large communal space decontamination units are being rolled out. More are on their way.
- More people will be trained in the use of the UV-C robots.
- All staff will move to LFD testing before every shift as well as the weekly PCR test.
- Increase of mask level to FFP2 for all staff who are unable to be vaccinated or have not received their booster inoculation. This will add greater protection to our residents as well as the individuals.
- Other actions will include cancelling Christmas gatherings of staff and managers and moving them online where ever possible.

Please remember no concern or worry is too small, just pick up the phone, we and our amazing teams are here for you and your loved ones. By working together and supporting each other, particularly in the difficult times, we will all get through this winter together.

Jodie, Christian, Pauline & Matthew