

Wessex Care Briefing No 5 (14/05/20)

Wiltshire continues with only sporadic individual staff testing positive and no residents. We have had one staff member test positive having had COVID three months ago and been recently vaccinated. In consultation with Public Health, they are isolating as current policy dictates but we are advised this is most likely a false positive or a reaction to continued, what is referred to as viral shedding, bit like dead leaves from a tree the test recognises them as a leaf but its dead.

Positive progress on visiting takes several steps forward with outside visits to open park like areas being allowed for residents to an increase from Monday (pending guidance) in the number of contact visitors and the return of hugging 😊. Malcolm will be re-issuing our guidance on visiting but our main challenge is the logistics of testing and ensuring adherence to the Infection Prevention and Control IPC measures including PPE use that we are required to have in place and be able to provide compliance evidence.

Therefore, starting with a defined group of visitors who would normally visit their loved ones on a daily basis we will be inviting them to be trained to take their LFD test and register the test at home prior to attending. They will present the 'NHS COVID-19 text notification of outcome' on entering the service. We will also look to support their ability to don and doff required PPE and attend to the specific visiting agreed area without requirement for close observation. If this proceeds successfully then we will look to extend this to other less frequent but regular visitors. Please be assured we will have in place monitoring systems with random checks to ensure compliance but we think the reality is our residents' visitors will all be only too happy to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their loved one and the other residents by adhering to the required IPC & PPE standards. Irrespective of the relaxation of social distance and visiting rules it remains our collective responsibility to be socially responsible and accountability for the protection of all our residents and community care customers and to demonstrate this by how we act and behave in our personal lives and during any type of visit. It's so good to see the increasing number of visitors and the addition of being able to go out to open park areas. (Sally we know you're ready for a beer in the park 😊) Please note there will still be a maximum number of visits, gradually increasing as resources allow, we can accommodate in a given day and Malcolm and his team have to be fair and equitable to all concerned. Please also note that there must be no wondering round the homes with or without residents, this is particularly true for Milford Manor. Visits must be conducted only in the designated area for your loved one which may be the pod, a bedroom, in the garden. If you need assistance then please use the nurse call system and a member of staff will attend. Little Manor Care Centre, our Intensive Rehabilitation and Complex Care service, will be returning to afternoon only visiting times between 2 and 4:30pm to ensure the rehabilitation can be delivered uninterrupted by visitors.

Vaccination

All residents that can be vaccinated have been and most have now received their second. Recent research has shown very high standards of protection, reduction of severity and transmission, all great news for our group of very vulnerable residents.

Over 90% + of staff have received first vaccination and 75%+ second. Due mainly to some normal turn over of employees there will be a divergence between a near total staff team who have received the first vaccination and the number who have received the second. Be assured we promote the vaccine to all staff rigorously and our teams have been very committed to participation. In fact, Wiltshire has one of the highest take up of the vaccine in care homes in England.

You will have read that the DHSC is conducting a consultation on whether all staff working in care homes should be required to be vaccinated. Please note the very careful use of the word they are using. I.e., employers will not be allowed to 'deploy' non vaccinated staff (other than in exempt categories) to care homes, instead of using employment law and stating that we are not allowed to employ non vaccinated people in care homes. The first puts the responsibility and risk on the employer the second would place the responsibility and risk on the legislation i.e., the government, should there be a challenge, and require extensive alteration to employment, discrimination and disability law. Our representative associations across England are not opposed to a law that states everyone has to be vaccinated, per say, to protect all but are very opposed to the singling out of care home staff that pose no more risk to the residents than do nurses, doctors etc in the NHS to their vulnerable patients, so why the discrimination.



We are pleased to confirm that Jo McMahon our new Service Manager has arrived and commenced her three-month induction programme where in time she will get to know all the residents, staff and families. Big Wessex Care family welcome to Jo.

Also, very pleased to announce the appointment of Kimberly West Head of Care Elaine Croal and Kimberly East Head of Care Lily McPhee both of which we have known and worked with for some time. Well done to you both, very excited to get you started in your new senior leadership roles.

On a practical note, Kimberly West & East back garden stair is finally having a roof fitted by our very own carpenter Graham. There is also a range of maintenance work which will now properly recommence including the completion of Kimberly West internal repaint now the building has settled, replacement of bathrooms and toilets at Milford Manor, external painting of Holmwood and renovation of the down stairs kitchen and lounge to include a bar facility. So, lots to be getting on with this spring and summer, all we hasten to add being conducted by our very own maintenance team ably lead by Dennis Humphries our longstanding and much valued Maintenance Manager.

On a baby note, Agnes (Head of Care, Community Team) has had her baby girl and both Mum, daughter and Dad all doing well. Jodie has instructed Agnes that she must have three months at least before return but we will see!

Finally, and for the first time, in our twentieth year, we were persuaded to enter as a company the national Care Home Awards and we are delighted to let everyone know that we are to be finalists in the following categories:

- Best for Infection Prevention and Control (including safe visiting spaces)
- Best Smaller Care Home Group (up to 25 homes)
- Best Response to Covid-19

More on this later but again thank you to each and every member of the Wessex Care family and to the wonderful supportive messages we have received from families and friends of all our residents and community customers.

Jodie, Christian, Pauline, Matthew