

Wessex Care Briefing 7 16/07/21 (amended 20/07/21)

It's a busy July with significant changes at a time of serious concern about the climbing infection rate and developing evidence on long COVID so we will start with the Care Quality Commission CQC (Registered Care Homes Independent Inspectors) who will release COVID 19 related mortality figures between April 2020 and March 2021 for all registered care homes in England on the 21st July 2021.

Wessex Care family wish to acknowledge that this data represents lives lost in the worst worldwide pandemic since Spanish Flu in 1918. We understand that the publication of this data will bring feelings of loss again to the fore for those who have lost a loved one, and so our thoughts are with all the families and friends who have lost someone. We also want to say a heartfelt thank you to those who worked diligently supporting the most vulnerable and their colleagues at a most unprecedented time.

Wessex Care's 6 residential Care Centres in Salisbury were fully operational during this period, one of which, Castle View has subsequently closed for rebuild and Little Manor Care Centre opened in November 2020.

Throughout this pandemic we have done our utmost to communicate with our residents and families as closely, openly and honestly as possible, believing that this approach, telling it as it is, would be the most beneficial on the premiss that the unknown is often more frightening and upsetting than the reality, even in a pandemic, also respecting their absolute right to know.

So, to this end, the news of the number of COVID 19 related deaths in our Care Centres will come as no surprise to the residents and families that have walked this journey with us all. The Wessex Care family is large and varied and includes our residents, their families and our staff, past and present and so we say to all our lost ones along the way, we will remember you, our condolences remain with all those left behind.

Three of our Care Centres have remained without COVID 19 outbreaks. Castle View when operational till Nov 2020, Little Manor (until it was commissioned in March 2021 as a 'Designated Setting' for COVID19+ patients as part of support to the hospitals during the peak of community contagion), and Holmwood.

CQC have presented Kimberly West & East as one mortality figure of 11. We want to break this down to be open about what happened in our service and how we worked to fight this virus.

In March 2020, 4 residents at Kimberly West, with significant comorbidities subsequently passed away in hospital with COVID 19 as a suspected contributing factor. At this time testing outside of hospital was not available and so we can't pinpoint with any certainty the source of the infection. This was the original less virulent COVID 19 virus and although little was known about how to combat it at this stage, our normal Infection Prevention and Control measures for any outbreak contained the spread and protected the other 23 residents.

Between April and June 2020 Kimberly East was segregated and isolated to run as a Hospital Discharge Support COVID+ Unit, providing a dedicated service for people either recovering from Covid19, or who were not expected to recover. During this time 3 more people who had been discharged from hospital into this service passed away.

In late January 2021 Kimberly East, where 27 of our residents live, was visited by a professional who we were subsequently told tested positive for Covid19. Following this 10 of our residents also tested

positive and very sadly 4 of those passed away. The remaining 6 people were nursed back to wellness.

In February 21 Milford Manor, our specialist complex dementia and mental health service, recorded positive test results within the home. The people living in Milford Manor can find it difficult to understand the need to self-isolate, and sometimes be unwilling to do so, and this contributed to 22 of our 28 residents eventually testing positive. 13 were cared for to wellness, but sadly 9 residents succumbed to the virus and passed away.

The eventual establishment of routine testing clearly indicated that some of our residents contracted COVID 19 before any member of staff tested positive, indicating that Wessex Care staff were not the source of the infection. Visits to the homes at this time were limited to professionals who needed to enter the home.

Following the early outbreak in March 2020 all Care Centres remained free from COVID 19 until late January 2021, except for our Hospital Discharge Support Unit, based, during the initial peak in 2020 at Kimberly East, then subsequently at Little Manor. This service was commissioned by the NHS and Wiltshire Council in support of the hospitals to provide COVID 19 patients with post-acute recovery or end of life care. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the brave Wessex Care staff who volunteered to work in this very special unit and supported 63 patients during 2 periods of peak pandemic spikes. They nursed 46 to recover and supported 17 with intensive end of life care and also helped to protect other care homes in Wiltshire by providing a dedicated Covid positive unit.

The teams, though deeply saddened by the loss of our residents and HDSU patients take some comfort, as we hope family's do, in the knowledge that everyone who passed did so with either a family member present or a carer they knew given dedicated time to offer comfort till the end.

This has been the most challenging and sad period for all of us at Wessex Care, and our staff carry the burden of all that they have been through. However, we are all proud to have been part of the Wessex Care family working tirelessly to protect residents from this most deadly virus while supporting their own families, the community and in particular our hospitals from becoming overwhelmed. Our teams have provided care and support to over 200 seriously at risk and or unwell residents, HDSU patients and people living in the community, an often unseen and unacknowledged frontline workforce, standing alongside thousands of others in Wiltshire and across the UK.

Without their professionalism, skill, resilience and dedication the loss could and would have been so very much greater. Every life lost was a personal tragedy for us, and the families and friends left behind. We will remember them as well as celebrating those that were cared for to wellness and those protected from contracting this virus.

Our work does not stop, it does not pause and the pandemic is still with us, so we all, residential and community teams, continue to serve the public of South Wiltshire and Salisbury every day and every night.

Learning from experience is fundamental to our development of quality practice and this pandemic and what we have learned is no different. While it will be sometime before nationally many of the potential lessons are identified and supported by research, we would like to share with you three of the key things we have learned and incorporated into our practice.

Symptom presentation is far greater than first advised and today we work from the premise that any change in someone's normal health status, can be an indication that we need to be extra vigilant, to test for Covid and to make sure all our residents are safely cared for.

Asymptomatic transfer, although originally played down, was identified by us early on as a very real and challenging issue with this virus. Rigorous implementation of testing, monitoring, vaccination of all residents, staff and where possible visitors, rigorous adherence to the new norm of enhanced Infection Protection and Control IPC including the use of masks will remain a feature of our future practice.

Speed of response to a potential outbreak is absolutely vital as the virus in its various forms is considerably more transmissible in the air over distance, particularly indoors, than was originally considered. Our investment and implementation and continual use of air UV-C decontamination and fogging disinfection systems will continue and be developed.

Visitors, well this just got even more complicated for us so we will break this down into sections:

Family & friends Visits: Despite our leaders announcement that care homes can fully open to visiting from the 19th July he failed to mention that we have not received any guidance as yet and that this guidance is very likely to require that all Infection Prevention and Control IPC measures remain in place which will include the continuation of testing, temp and SATs, wearing PPE, visits in designated areas etc all of which will require us to continue monitoring and supporting so limits on numbers, length of visits will continue for the foreseeable future. The fact that they have decided to mandate all staff and visitors to be vaccinated except for emergency services and family visitors leaves us in a frankly very difficult position where we had hoped the inclusion of family visitors other than those exempt would have allowed us much greater flexibility. Anyway, we will await the pearls of wisdom in yet another set of visiting guidance and as always consider it carefully based on keeping all our residents and staff as safe as possible while ensuring we can support and protect as much visiting as possible. Please be patient we will not be changing arrangements immediately on Monday but will work as quickly as possible to make what changes we can. Malcolm and team will of course be in touch as always to make what ever the changes are as positive and lest restrictive as possible.

All other Visitors: All other visitors, (except those exempt) will be required to prove that they have been fully vaccinated along with all employees, managers and Directors of Wessex Care. So, we have a huge task ahead of working out how to do this so, for example, a visiting GP does not have to prove they have been vaccinated on multiple visits to care homes. This will also face us with a number of data protection challenges to consider. This covers all visiting professionals(excluding emergency services), service engineers, CQC inspectors, Environmental Health inspectors, etc etc a very long list!

Vaccination: Our figures continue to be very good on % level of vaccination for first and second does and we have moved to the introduction of this as a requirement of employment when this becomes law. We see no immediate issues with this requirement in our care teams the main challenge will be finding a way to reduce the appointment to start dates if someone has not previously been vaccinated. It is a concern that this delay and requirement to be vaccinated may exacerbate an already difficult recruitment position particularly with nurses when they will be able to go and work in the NHS currently without this requirement.

Outbreaks and Testing: We are pleased to confirm that we have had no outbreaks or any staff or visitors testing positive on either the LFD or PCR tests. We have had staff self-isolating because of school children being sent home due to possible COVID contact and one fully vaccinated employee whose child has recently tested positive so again the whole family are self-isolating and we are conducting a whole home test. We continue to closely monitor vaccination status of all new

residents with almost all having received at least one if not both. Our Intensive Rehab service at Little Manor being a little different as the age range is much greater does mean we are seeing small numbers of residents where we are arranging the vaccinations.

Staffing information: Lily Mc Phee, Head of Care at Kimberly East is leaving us for personal reason and we wish Lily well. Lily was one of the core team through the early days of our Hospital Discharge Support COVID+ Unit at Kimberly East and we will always be grateful for her dedication and commitment during those early very difficult times. Thank you, Lily, for everything you will be missed. We are very pleased to announce that Linda Snellgove has been appointed as the new Head of Care at Kimberly East. Linda is currently a senior nurse in Kimberly West and has been a Deputy Manager with a previous care service so Linda comes with bags of experience. Welcome Linda we look forward to supporting your transition with Lily's and of course Jo McMahon support.

A message to all our amazing Wessex Care family reminding them, particularly following the release of the mortality information, that any press interest should be directed to the office. Also letting you know, so that you are all forewarned, that when this happened in Scotland there was significant press interest and some unpleasant social media targeted at individual nurses and carers so you may want to consider your social media controls during this period and remember we are here to support you should you have any issues. It is also true to say that there was an overwhelming amount of very supportive and appreciative comments as well.

Entertainment / Summer BBQ / Celebrating and 100th birthday.

While we are still having to be cautious when it comes to the number of visitors, we can welcome back into the Wessex Care homes, we are delighted to be able to continue to expand on our visiting activity providers and entertainers, albeit in a carefully managed way.

Alongside our trio of visiting singers who continue to entertain both residents and staff (and in some cases, the local neighbourhood), we have more sessions booked with the scaly, furry and feathered friends of the Creature Teachers (and the lovely Lisa, of course) and we are very glad to have Sandi beginning to offer opportunities to move, stretch and relax with her outdoor chair yoga classes as well as bringing some alternative physical and cognitive stimulation in her Variety Hour sessions.

Following suggestions from the residents at the Kimberly's, Kaz and Sophie have been busy organising a summer barbecue which took place on the 14th and, in true Wessex style, saw the gardens turned into a private beach with sand, paddling pools and even palm trees and entertainment from the resident 'bubbologist' from Squidge and Pop and music from the ever-popular Mike Sidaway. Simon and the kitchen team provided delicious food and drinks with freshly made ice-cream from Carlo's of West Wellow to round things off. We did try to book a donkey as well but sadly this time, it was not meant to be!

Also, at Kimberly West this month we celebrated the 100th birthday of our beloved Muriel and, while we couldn't organise the party that the family had wished for, we did manage to connect with those who couldn't be physically present via zoom on the day.

As always please don't sit on a worry or concern but do feel free to contact us. We may not always get it right or have the answer but we will do our best to try.

END

Jodie, Christian, Pauline, Matthew