

Wessex Care Briefing 8 (08/10/21)

It's been an interesting summer for us all with focus on whether the vaccine campaign will break the link between infection rates, hospital admission and mortality figures. Well today it is clear that the vaccine roll out has been very successful in breaking these links and the top-up (third jab) and migration to inoculation of teenagers will further assist this significant achievement. We can only be immensely grateful to the dedicated people around the world that produced the various vaccines and to the team led by the NHS that got it out to the population of the UK. Care home residents and staff have significantly benefitted from its success and it is the key reason we will be talking later about the relaxation of visiting requirements in the coming weeks.

It has been 11 weeks since our last full briefing (you will have received updates on visiting requirements in-between) so what have we been doing? Apart from the everyday care and support to our residents and community customers a major effort has been to support all staff with a break as for many their last break was over 18 months ago. So today we are pleased to have made sure that all staff have had some level of break and recuperation in time for what will probably be one of the most challenging winters for Social Care and the NHS. We are preparing again to support the NHS and our local hospital with our Intensive Rehabilitation service and widening this important step-down service from hospital within our other services including support from our Mental Health & Complex Dementia care service at Milford Manor Care Centre. So, plans are well advanced, a very large percentage of our staff have received their third booster inoculation and have also had their flu jabs.

This winter will not only be challenging in support of the Hospitals and wider community but also challenging in terms of recruitment. All parts of the health & social care sector are and have been experiencing significant challenges since the immigration rules changed and I am sure you will have seen that we are not the only sector that is having problems. Our difference is unlike other sectors that can simply afford to pay huge increases in pay we are constrained by the funds the government gives to Councils and the NHS to pay for the care we provide. This is also true for privately funded residents who most can simply not absorb high percentage increase to our staff in what is a very competitive market. Therefore health & social care are somewhat caught between a rock and a hard place. However, having said all that it's not all about the money. It's about training opportunities, it's about care and valuing each and every staff member so please as the saying goes, 'the world is short staffed so be kind to those that showed up!'

On the 11th November no one will be allowed to work in a registered care home without having received or be in the process of receiving their double COVID 19 vaccination. Apart from the minimal number of employees who are medically exempt there is only five members of staff that because of their personal beliefs will not continue working with us at Wessex Care. To them we say thank you for your service over the years, you will be and are a very sad loss to us and indeed to health & social care but we completely respect and support your right to make this decision. As we will have some residents and some staff who will not have been vaccinated within the current rules than we are developing special Infection Prevention and Control IPC measures which in essence will mirror the level of IPC & PPE measures we currently have in place. So, each situation where either a member of staff or resident cannot be inoculated then there will be a requirement to maintain the amber level of PPE when and if a resident who is not inoculated has to be cared for by a member of staff who cannot be inoculated. We will work to avoid this situation wherever possible but there may be times when this cannot be avoided and therefore a higher level of IPC & PPE will be deployed.

In addition, and in support of our current extensive IPC measures which includes the use of UV-C decontamination units we are pleased to announce that we have acquired bedroom specific UV-C and HEP filtration units which will work continually and quietly in the back ground in every bedroom (except Milford Manor) to continually clean the air and kill any viruses including COVID 19 and Flu whatever the strain. We were the first in England to deploy this technology in a care setting and this will build on its undoubted success at reducing the potential viral loads in any given space. For Milford Manor we cannot place these units in the bedrooms as with this wonderful clientele they wouldn't last five minutes, but instead we have opted for 10 larger wall mounted units that will be placed strategically throughout the building and collectively with the, already in place, large capacity units act to decontaminate in the same way and at the same level. We wanted this in place before the winter set in as at this time we will have limited capacity to reduce any viral load by venting the buildings natural.

Before we move to discuss the future arrangements for visiting, we wanted to acknowledge that Malcolm Burgin our Welfare & Engagement lead will be leaving us shortly. Malcom has been throughout the pandemic the voice for many relatives at the end of the phone. He has also been the organiser and main support for all visiting arrangements both face to face and by other electronic means and been supporting the Welfare and Care teams to provide an activity programme in very difficult and challenging circumstances. We are immensely grateful for his dedication and service, and we wish him well in all his future endeavours. Malcolm will be replaced by Stephanie Shearing who holds a Bachelor of Arts (International Events Management) who will start shortly and hopefully this will allow for a good handover. We have known Stephanie for many years and she has an extensive background in events planning and management heading up Salisbury Bid including three Salisbury Christmas fairs. Currently working as Tourism and Events Officer for Bradford and Avon Town Council Stephanie will bring a wealth of experience working with the likes of Help the Heroes and Mencap. We look forward to welcoming Stephanie to the Wessex Care family.

So, to visiting; it seems strange to be saying that we will be moving away, finally, from limited booked visiting arrangements over the coming weeks, but that's the success of the vaccine, our greater understanding of the virus and how to manage and control it in our homes. This brings a sufficient level of risk management and mitigation that allows us, despite the high levels of community infection, to develop a new way of managing and coordinating all visiting.

In principle we intend to move the responsibility from one of us checking and controlling visiting and the documentation, IPC & PPE requirements to the individual who is visiting. This new system will be audited. Essentially every visitor will be required to sign up to a visiting code of conduct, as before, but this will place the onus on the individual to comply with a set of requirements.

There will be visitor stations with all paperwork and equipment necessary to comply with the following prior to ringing the doorbell for entry.

- Provide proof of double vaccination (all visitors except resident families and emergency personnel). We will still strongly encourage all family and friends visiting to ensure, if they can be, that they have been double vaccinated and to inform us of their vaccination status.
- To have carried out their own LFD tests and recorded result prior to any visit or entry to home. You can order test kits from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/> or we are happy to give you a box from our head office. Tests are to be registered at: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> and the UON for the home you are visiting needs to be inputted: The Kimberlies (West & East) – 10120699, Little Manor 10171940, Milford

Manor – 10079630, Holmwood – 10020337. Of course, a negative result is required. If you are a new visitor this may require attendance at the head office in advance for initial test, instruction and provision of test kits.

- Record at the new Visitor & IPC station being place outside the entrance to each service, required checks including temperature, sats etc and to record the answers to the COVID 19 related visitor questions.
- To wash and gel their hands and put on the required level of PPE before ringing the doorbell to gain entry (apron, surgical mask, shoe covers or to have disinfected bottoms of shoes – minimum level of PPE required for every visitor). PPE wear is not negotiable.
- Visits will now take place in resident's bedrooms as a preference.
- Visits remain limited in amount of time but have been increased to 1 hour.

All of the above is to be completed without staff assistance or supervision and therefore based on an honour system of compliance. As stated above we will have an audit process to check compliance. Any new visitors can and will receive support, tuition and assistance where required as will any visitor who requires ongoing assistance to comply.

Please note any visitor deliberately flouting the requirements will be immediately prevented from any further visiting until such time as a senior management review of their conduct can be considered.

In the updated visiting guidance attached you will see reference to 14 to 19 year olds and we should also make reference to the Wiltshire Care Home and South West regional position in the context of our changes to visiting and the need to continue to be very vigilant with IPC and PPE requirements. Our local Director of Public Health highlighted for care homes the significant level of infection within this age group and advised we pay particular attention to the risk of anyone from this age group or from any visitor that may live with a member of the household in this age group. Therefore, we are strongly advising that at this time while the infection rate is so high in this group that they refrain from visiting and that other visitors that have a household member within this age group identify themselves to us so that we may risk assess the individual situations. Mitigating factors will be levels of inoculation in the house hold etc.

Turning to outbreaks and known positive staff and residents in care homes in the South West then Wiltshire does present as an outlier. Wiltshire has one of the highest levels of infection in the UK though there are contexts to this.

- 1) Wiltshire came late to the significant increase in community transfer with the Delta variant and where other areas have now fallen off Wiltshire is behind the experienced trajectory in other areas.
- 2) Most of the so-called outbreaks and positive results with residents and staff appear to be isolated incidents which are not translating to large scale out breaks as a result of both the vaccination programme and of course the dedication to IPC & PPE protocols. For Wessex Care this has translated to two residents of our Intensive Rehabilitation service testing positive following a visit from an NHS therapist who subsequently was identified as positive and had transmitted this to the residents and one other therapist (the therapists are employed by Wiltshire Health & Care). None of our employees or other residents were affected. In addition, we have had, since the last briefing, five staff independently test positive as part of their testing requirements. All unrelated and with no transference into the service they work in. Again, clearly indicating that the vaccine and our IPC & PPE

protocols are working. We are pleased to state that both residents and all staff testing positive were either asymptomatic or recovered well and did not need any hospitalisation.

We hope you have heard about all the summer activities and receiving the news bulletins and indeed joined some when this was possible. The residents have had a busy summer and with Stephanie arriving we will be having a complete overhaul of our activities and visiting entertainers so lots to look forward to even if we can't get any turkeys!

Other staff information:

Agnes Atras is returning following maternity leave following the birth of her beautiful baby girl, Imogen, to once again take command of the Community team that have continued supporting our community customers with Elzbieta and Nina fantastic support to Jodie covering. Thank you both and the team for your support during Agnes's absence. They will shortly not only welcome Agnes back but also two new members of the team.

Welcome to all our new Wessex Care family members that have joined us in the last three months we hope you are settling in well and remember there are no daft questions, if you are not certain then ask and if you don't get a sensible answer than come and ask us at the office, we are always here to help you.

As always thank you to all our amazing employees we have a tough winter ahead but we are very well prepared. To all our residents and their families and friends thank you for your continued support and the lovely and at times very touching messages you have sent. We make sure that the teams see these as it is such a boost for them. We would please continue to encourage you to give us feedback on the homes your loved ones are in via <https://www.carehome.co.uk/submitreview> . You can do this via the website or there are postcards within the homes that you can hand write a post. Your feedback is so very important to us.

Finally, as we stated earlier, recruitment is a challenge so please talk to your families and friends about working with us. All you need to begin with is a kind heart, a work ethic, we can teach / train the rest. Older, younger, full time, part time, caring responsibility's, black, white or with green spots we have no bars what so ever, we reflect all aspects of the community we are here to serve. As an employer we will look to providing a very rewarding flexible employment within our residential service or in the community. Give it a try you might surprise yourself.

END

Jodie, Christian, Pauline & Matthew