

Wessex Care Resident & Visitor Briefing 2021 Number 1

First Briefing of 2021 and we are in the thick of it like all residential providers hospitals and community services. It is now clear that this third wave variant is extremely infectious and able to circumnavigate some of the IPC and PPC measure that were very effective during the other first and second waves of this pandemic.

Headlines

All homes and our community service customers have remained free from infection except unfortunately residents and staff at Kimberly East. All families have been contacted and, in consultation with Public Health, we have measures in place to support and contain the outbreak.

Our assessment of this is the virus entered probably via a visiting professional who was later identified as positive or a member of staff before our daily LFD testing had started on the 4th January. There was an initial infection which affected five residents two of which have sadly since passed, but the others appear well on the way to recovery. As with the outbreak back in late March 2020 in Kimberly West the residents that passed had significant comorbidities. Our thoughts are with their loved ones and they will be sadly missed.

This outbreak was contained and all would have been clear as of 12th but returning tests has identified what looks like a secondary outbreak which we are currently working to contain. We have significant numbers of staff from KE who have tested positive and are currently self-isolating. Currently they and our residents almost all seem to be asymptomatic and okay.

We have tried and tested plans to manage both the outbreaks and the staffing shortages which have included the Clinical Director Pauline Airey taking direct hands-on control of the Care Centre to support the Head of Care, nursing and care team currently with Jodie Scott the Operations Director.

There was a scare at Milford Manor when one staff member PCR test came back positive prior to our start of the LFD test and we instigated an immediate lock down and decontamination procedure. However, like we have had before both at Milford Manor and at Castle View no other positive test of either residents or staff was identified and subsequent LFD and PCR tests have all returned negative. Therefore, in consideration with PH and considering how very infectious this version of the virus is then we are confident this was probably one of the rare PCR false positives.

All Care Centre visiting family and friends will know from direct contact following the national level 5 lock down measures and a review of our COVID-19 risk assessment we took the difficult decision to suspend all internal or Pod visits. More on this later.

Testing

On the 4th January we instigated the guidance and requirement to start using the new LFD testing which we described in the previous brief.

As most will be aware from previous brief we had some concerns regarding the accuracy of this test for the identification of asymptomatic infectious people and we provided, attached to that brief the manufactures information and guidance. This indicated its effectiveness and accuracy had not been test with asymptomatic people which is what we had been advised was the main purpose for using

this type of test with our staff group and visitors. Subsequent to this and following the Liverpool study which indicated that the test did have a better level of accuracy we were issued with DHSC guidance and PH advice that we should introduce the testing regimen but without relaxing any of our IPC or PPE measures. You will have received a statement on this attached to the last Brief from the local Director of Public Health and Director of Commissioning from Wiltshire Council.

So, 11 days in we have used the LFD test approximately 750 times covering all staff across the company and all visitors, this has produced 10 positive results all staff or residents at KE. When we get a positive this is followed at the same time with a confirmatory PCR test. To date every positive LFD test has been subsequently supported by a positive PCR test. Where we have had a separate standalone positive PCR test, we have taken the opportunity to test the LFD test and it has also identified a positive result in every case. Therefore, our current sample test, though low, is producing some promising results.

In order to manage this extensive regime of testing we have set up a testing centre at our head office and currently have two experienced nurses supporting this plus additional administration time. The LFD test has only just been approved for our staff to conduct at home in the same way NHS currently operate. Therefore, our nurses are also taking the opportunity to train each staff member in its application. In addition, they are testing all visiting professionals who have not been tested by their agency, all essential maintenance and service engineers and any other visitors prior to admission to the service. This includes all head office and maintenance support teams and all of our community team.

Vaccination

We can now confirm that approximately 90% of our staff including community have received their first vaccination and that we are informed resident in home vaccination will commence next week or the following week. Please do ensure that the NHS / CARE consent forms that have been / are being issued are filled in and returned asap. For all residents that 'lack capacity' to consent, the correct people will be contacted to provide consent or to be involved in the making of a 'Best Interest Decision'. The consent must all be in place before an inoculation can be provided.

Visiting

As stated in the Headline section we have taken the difficult decision to suspend all in home and external pod visiting except for palliative end of life care. Government and PH guidance does allow us to make an individual decision but from the most recent local Director of Public Health and Interim Corporate Director, letter attached, you will see all services will be fully supported if they decide based on their risk assessment to close to kinship visitors at this time. We can tell you that most providers small and large, we are aware of, have taken this decision indeed 50 plus homes across Wiltshire are currently closed to admission and visiting due to outbreaks. Between now and the end of January is going to be the most severe test of the NHS and the residential and community care sector.

We are very grateful to everyone who has supported this decision and again thank you for your lovely supportive comments which mean so much to the teams at this most difficult time for them and us all.

To anyone who has disagreed, we respect your view but hope you will, none the less, understand why we have taken this difficult decision which must take into account everyone's views and opinions which we have to balance with our professional risk assessment that must function not only to protect each individual resident but act to try and protect all.

To assist we will now layout our current key concerns:

- This new variant has proven to be very infectious and there is clear evidence that once it enters a group setting it is significantly more challenging to Infection Protection & Control IPC and Personal Protective Equipment PPE precautions.
- This variant appears to be able to be sustained during air transmission for prolonged periods of time and over potentially greater distances.
- Asymptomatic transfer is a much more significant issue with this version of the virus.
- The levels of infection are considerably higher than previously and we therefore have significantly more staff currently isolating as the result of testing and track and trace.
- Isolating residents when there is an outbreak requires significant staff time to ensure the standard of direct individual care, welfare and protection are maintained.
- Testing removes a significant amount of staff time with significant challenges in replacing this time as a result of staff shortages and the restrictions of mobility of staff and use / lack of agency staff.

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that any type of visits even window visits require an LFD test prior to attendance and that the required PPE and IPC standards are adhered too. So, to be clear no LFD test then we will not authorise any type of visit no matter who the visitor is and this includes our CQC inspectors.

Our winter planning has allowed us to mitigate some of these key concerns principally with the early recruitment and training of significantly more staff than we would normally operate with. However, the above combined issues have required us, in order to ensure we sustain the standards of care welfare and protection, to suspend kinship visiting at this time. It is our assessed view that, based on current infection rate evidence and England wide Provider combined frontline emerging knowledge, that we should be able to see some relaxation in this position towards the end of January. However, we will continue to review this every week.

All the teams remain committed to providing as much other forms of contact as can be achieved within the resources, we have available and Malcom and the welfare team will continue to organise and support this along with our continuing welfare programme.

Little Manor Care Centre & Hospital Discharge Support Unit COVID+

We have been asked at short notice to again provided a 'Dedicated Service' HDSU COVID+ to support the hospitals that are in significant difficulties. We provided this service at Kimberly East during the first peak of the virus and again as strategic partner of the NHS and Wiltshire Council we are committed to doing whatever we can to support our community and hospitals during this pandemic. Therefore, the Intensive Rehabilitation service at Little Manor Care Centre is currently being prepared for repurposing as a wholly dedicated HDSU operational and open to admission from Thursday the 21st January. The majority of the staff including the senior leaders are the same team

that set up and provided the service between April and July last year and they will be again directly hands-on lead by Jodie Scott the Operations Director with Lucy Dodd as Head of Care. To all the team and particularly the new members who have all volunteered and to all our staff currently supporting COVID positive and negative residents we say directly to each and every one of you; you are amazing and inspiring, stay strong, remember we are here with you every step of the way and always contactable. Be proud of yourselves, rest when you can and keep yourselves and your loved ones safe.

To all, we are here to answer any concerns or support requirements you may need. Roll on the vaccine as this is the light at the end of this long tunnel so please stay safe follow the guidance and get vaccinated as soon as it is available.

Pauline, Matthew, Jodie & Christian