

## Wessex Care 5<sup>th</sup> COVID-19 Briefing [20/05/20]

So May is in full swing and so is Wessex Care!

Malcom and the welfare teams have been doing the rounds again contacting all family's and loved ones to make sure we are supporting contact in whatever way works for you. They have also been developing the activity programs with social distanced live music and singing entertainment from outside of the buildings and a Wessex Care Zoom music quiz where there was lots of fun and laughter; Castle View resident and staff team prevailed and took the honours.

We have had a couple of family members quite rightly raise questions about movement of staff between services and this week has seen the government briefings regarding deaths in Care Homes and additional support they are providing to manage infection control.

Firstly let me reassure you that no nursing or care staff from Kimberly East the Hospital Discharge Support Service (HDSU) who have worked in the restricted area at East, have worked anywhere else in the company. There are staff assigned to the HDSU but who have not worked in the restricted area as of yet as the number of Patients has not warranted their assistance. These staff are currently reassigned to the other services or have returned to their original unit. If and when they are called upon to work in the HDSU restricted areas then at that time they would no longer work in any other service.

As stated in the Briefings, we did in the early weeks of the virus have four residents admitted to hospital that were subsequently tested as positive and subsequently passed. Although we are not certain of the source of the infection, which could have been in the hospital, it is likely that either it arrived from an asymptomatic admission or an asymptomatic member of staff or visitor. We now know that residents and staff can be asymptomatic but still infectious, which is why we have been part of the call on government to provide us with the ability to test all residents and staff something they are still trying to make operational.

Since this time we did manage as part of a small piolet scheme to test six residents in West, four of which tested positive. These were all residents who had underlying significant health issues; we focused on respiratory issues as a precursor to being tested. The four positive residents where then corralled within a dedicated pod in West with restricted access and the correct PPE controls in place. One of these residents subsequently passed and the other three I am pleased to say are doing well and will be leaving the pod once they have been retested and proven to be negative. To date we have had no further symptomatic residents and all staff, bar one, that had tested positive and had already been self-isolating, have now tested negative and returned to work.

The next big test will be the mass testing which I am pleased to announce started on Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> May at Kimberly West & East. The other services will follow based on local Public Health and Adult Social Care priority assessments supported by national guidance.

We will continue to monitor the developments closely and respond to the latest Public Health England advice. We are in close contact on a bye weekly basis with our senior colleagues in the Council Adult Social Care and Public Health and with the local Clinical Commissioning Group[NHS] who are all working together to support us and all Providers in Wiltshire during this pandemic. As part of this partnership Wiltshire Providers have a webinar with Dr Robin Sackrell Medical Director

and Consultant Geriatrician today to share further our collective experience in caring for residents with COVID-19, protection measures for all residents in our care and range of symptoms specific to older people.

Infection control remains, as it has always been, one of our top priority's which is why we closed to visitors very early, used barrier nursing and bedroom isolation of all residence were ever we identified concerns, have maintained strict staff monitoring of illness and self-isolation, strictly followed PHE PPE guidance, introduce heightened levels and frequency of clean down procedures from an early start along with specialist COVID-19, infection control and PPE training for every single member of staff. We have and will continue to use rigorously the most up-to-date guidance and indeed try to work ahead of the guidance standards where ever we can.

Employee support has developed with confirmation in Wiltshire that self-isolating Social Care staff are to be paid at a similar level to furloughed employees under the government scheme for other sector workers. The COVID-19 grant funds will arrive shortly and all staff will receive backdated pay from the 1<sup>st</sup> April. With the addition of the statutory sick pay all staff will receive very nearly 100% of their average income while self-isolating. This programme is funded till the end of June.

Malcom has been developing further, on our behalf, additional support to our amazing teams mental and physical welfare with the start of 'Mindfulness' and Pilate sessions on Zoom. Staff can access these sessions from anywhere using their smart devices. Recently local companies, community groups and individuals have been so generous in recognising the importance of what our teams of Social Care workers are doing to protect their residents and community customers while maintaining support to the hospital and other community services. This has taken the form of people making Scrubs , Scrub bags, face mask ties, though to schools producing face shields, free pizzas being delivered and much much more. So a big thankyou to everyone in our community for thinking of our very special teams.

Discharge from Hospitals to care home testing continues and there is no discharge without a negative test. If they test positive for COVID-19 they will be discharge to our HDSU at Kimberly East where they will be cared for until they are clear.

All admissions to any of our homes other than the HDSU will be barrier nursed in their room for a minimum of 14 days as an additional precaution. All admissions to the HDSU will automatically be barrier nursed until clear of the virus and then they will be discharged home or to another appropriate service.

To all our fantastic family of Wessex Care we again thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your selfless devotion and dedication to our residents and community customers. It is such a privilege to work alongside each and every one of you. Remember to maintain your personal protection, as the restrictions ease for others they cannot for Health & Social Care Workers.

Please be assured we have and will continue to do everything in our power to care and protect our residents, community customers and employees while supporting the NHS and Social Care colleagues.

Pauline, Matthew, Jodie & Christian [Directors]