

Wessex Care 11th Briefing [07/08/20]

Headline as we prepare this our 11th Briefing is yet another promise to the Social Care sector postponed and of course on a much brighter note summer appears to have arrived in Salisbury this weekend.

As reported in the 10th Briefing we should have by now been testing all or staff every 7 days and all our residents on a 28-day period. In addition, all volunteers, visiting professionals and agency staff were also to be tested every time they attended the service. There was also to be consideration of this being extended to all visitors.

On Tuesday it was confirmed to us that the testing (we had as yet not received any test kits for the 7 & 28 day testing) was to be postponed till September at the earliest and those homes that had started the 7/28 days tests would not receive any more tests when their current stocks ran out! The explanation is varied depending who you listen to, Government, DHSC, PHE. As far as we can tell this seems to be either as a result of having to stop using a significant number of tests from a particular supplier due to some unspecified fault or our favourite, that it is the Care Home providers fault because we are not sending test in over a weekend thus causing problems with capacity at the labs!

Whatever the reason we are not going to get the testing that formed part of the 'band of steel' promised for some time. Therefore, we are in consultation with a private, highly reputable, testing company to bring forward an independent plan to start regular testing of all of our staff as a first step. We have chosen the staff as the transfer of infection into the homes, if it comes, will come from outside from any type of visitor, professional or otherwise, or through new admissions. This is already significantly mitigated by the control measures we have in place including, restricted access of any type of visitor and the strict policy and procedures in place and implementation of infection prevention and control measures including PPE standards for everyone. However, numerically our staff are the greatest number of individuals entering the service from outside therefore statistically the most likely route despite their absolute commitment to keeping themselves safe and protected while outside of the service; testament to our current COVID 19 negative status.

Therefore, as the government scientific advisors had recommended testing staff on a regular basis would further support our defences with early identification particular of asymptomatic but none the less infectious individuals, we are proposing a different test regime. Our new proposed test is an immune response test which is conducted in house and we have the answer in 15 minutes. This test is not instead of the ongoing ad hock arrangement of the government test but an additional test which provides a wider amount of information very quickly and if repeated every 14 days will augment our ability to monitor and react to our staff group infection status in relation to COVID-19. This pin prick blood test provides a proven and authenticated specificity of 100% and an accuracy of 99.42%.

The Antibody Testing can provide four (4) results:

1. Negative - meaning the participant does not have the antibodies for the COVID-19 virus
2. Positive IgM - meaning the participant has the IgM antibody, indicating initial stage of infection.

3. Positive IgG - meaning the participant has the IgG antibody and they have been exposed to COVID-19 in the past and therefore there is potential immunity against COVID-19 and;
4. Positive IgM and IgG - meaning the participant has both the IgM and IgG antibodies and confirms it is a later stage of infection: typically, at 7+ days after symptoms appear.

Once we have insurance approval and we hope some backing from our local Director of Public Health we will seek to roll this out in the next week or so.

Please note all admissions and any resident returning from short stay admission to hospitals are all COVID 19 screened within 48hrs of admission and must have a negative test. They are then quarantined for 14 days and tested again, requiring another negative test before leaving quarantine.

Visiting Care Homes

As confirmed last week in our email, with attached draft guidance and draft required internal individual resident risk assessment, we had hoped to start the risk assessment which will now start on Monday as new guidance was issued in the week which required some minor alterations. Apparently, we are to ask you all when you start visiting to walk or cycle to the visit so for those of you living in another county you have a long walk or bike journey ahead of you!

In the real world we have been preparing external visiting areas so once each risk assessment is complete and it confirms what type of visit provides the least risk to that individual resident, the group they live with and to the visitor we will be able to start bookings we hope sometime towards the end of next week or sooner if we can. All bookings will be strictly through the central office and you will be emailed with guidance when we are ready to start.

If a resident lacks capacity to consent to the visit type our risk assessment has indicated then a 'Best Interest' decision will have to be considered in the normal way.

We will continue to support all the other types of visiting as these have generally gone very well and been very well received by all involved.

We received recently our special Emergency Support Framework (ESF) CQC inspection of all services and we are pleased to attach to this email the results. As you will see the inspector considered, 'From our discussion and other information about this location, we assess that you are managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.' There are other very supportive comments so please read them. They are the same for each service as this was an overall companywide targeted inspection with regard to our management and resilience during this pandemic.

Finally, and we know we keep repeating this, but please remember although the general public restrictions are easing, for our amazing staff they are required to remain very cautious about any contact, to keep this to a minimum wearing in and out of work masks when required. 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.

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