

Wessex Care 8th Briefing [10/07/20]

We thought that a few facts about central government guidance and statements regarding hospital discharge to care homes and Wessex Care position as reported in our Briefings would be of benefit this week considering Mr Johnsons apparent accidental remark about it all being the care homes fault as they didn't follow guidance.

10th February. The government's own Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) advised that "it is a realistic probability that there is already sustained transmission in the UK, or that it will become established in the coming weeks."

25th February. PHE . "It remains very unlikely that people receiving care in a care home or the community will become infected". "Currently there is no evidence of transmission of Covid-19 in the United Kingdom. There is no need to do anything differently in any care setting at present."

3rd March. The government released its coronavirus action plan - the document did not mention restricting visits to care homes. The same day, the Chief Medical Officer for England Prof Chris Whitty said on care homes: "One of the things we're keen to avoid is doing things too early, because if you do them early you get no benefit from the epidemic, but what you do get is a social cost."

5th March. England had had 273 cases of people with the virus. That day Prof Whitty told a committee of MPs that as there were cases that could not be traced back to people who had come from abroad, it was "highly likely therefore that there is some level of community transmission in this virus in the UK now".

6th March. Nursing Homes Ireland, which represents hundreds of care homes in Ireland, banned non-essential visits, just six days after the first confirmed case in the country.

13th March. The government's guidance from 25 February was updated to say that "care home providers are advised to review their visiting policy, by asking no-one to visit who has suspected Covid-19 or is generally unwell, and by emphasising good hand hygiene for visitors".

16th March Wessex Care closed to all visiting except palliative care at Milford Manor due to residents' extreme level of risk. All other services had very restricted access with strict requirements implemented.

16th March. It was announced that social distancing should be carried out by everyone, in particular those aged over 70 and vulnerable people.

19th March. NHS guidance said that "unless required to be in hospital, patients must not remain in an NHS bed". This policy was implemented to free up beds in advance of an expected surge in coronavirus patients.

21st March. Guidance was introduced to encourage medically vulnerable people to remain indoors as much as possible until the end of June - a process known as shielding.

23rd March. The wider lockdown was announced on 23 March; so when were measures to protect people in care homes introduced?

23rd March Wessex Care closed all residential units to all visitors except palliative care visits, despite no guidance or requirement to do so. Implementation of 14-day isolation for all admissions with staff in level of PPE advised by PHE.

2nd April. Department of Health and Social Care said that "family and friends should be advised not to visit care homes, except next of kin in exceptional situations such as end of life".

2nd April. Rules on lockdown were clarified, saying "negative [coronavirus] tests are not required prior to transfers/admissions into the care home". Even elderly hospital patients who had tested positive could be admitted to care homes.

3rd April Local NHS / Hospitals implement, against national guidance, patients requiring a negative COVID-19 test before discharge to care home settings other than for the Hospital Discharge Support Units that had been specifically set up to care for older people who were known or suspected by a Consultant to have COVID-19 and required nursing to health, without need for critical care support, or to be supported palliatively.

3rd April Wessex Care PPE stock to full capacity following very early acquisition. All staff, residential and community continue to have full PPE availability and instruction on use as per PHE guidance.

9th April Wessex Care HDSU opens and fully operational ahead of expected COVID-19 surge over the Easter weekend

15th April. The government said that all patients discharged from hospitals would be tested for coronavirus. By this time, more than 5,700 residents in England and Wales had died either in their care home or in hospital.

20th April Wessex Care part of early resident testing pilot and also able to refer staff to local testing when symptomatic.

1st May local testing and pilots for staff and residents who were symptomatic stopped on central government instruction to allow national system to take over. National system started 11th May.

3rd June whole home all resident and staff blanket testing now working. System launch could not cope with initial demand. Wessex Care proceed with previous stock test kits anyway and complete 12th June.

12th June commenced UV-C Decontamination system, first use in the UK in a residential care setting.

Infection control remains, as it has always been, one of our top priority's which is why we closed to visitors 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 or where ahead of PHE PPE guidance, introduced 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.

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