

Rt Hon. Helen Whately,
Minister of State for Care
Department of Health and Social Care

Adult Services
Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY2 6ND

Date: 28 May 2020

My Ref:

Your Ref

Dear Rt Hon. Helen Whately,

Re: Shropshire Resilience Plan: System Wide Support for Care Homes

Thank you for your letters of the 14th and 22nd May 2020 setting out the Government's response to the support for care homes and the details of the Infection Control Fund. We are writing in response to your request for an overview of our current activity and forward plan in support of the Care Homes in Shropshire.

Shropshire Council is the local authority of Shropshire in England. It is a Unitary Authority, having the powers of a non-metropolitan county and district council combined. In Shropshire we work closely with our neighboring authority in Telford and Wrekin and we have one CCG and one Acute Trust working across the STP. The STP partnership is strong and robust and we are working together very effectively though the Covid 19 crisis. As statutory partners/commissioners the LA and CCG have closely followed guidelines throughout and put support in place in line with that and above and beyond in some cases. This gives us a good level of confidence in our system response and we have a very effective structure to plan, action and respond to issues as they arise, particularly in relation to Care Homes in the region. This consists of:

- Gold Command (daily)
- Silver Command (daily)
- Shropshire Telford and Wrekin Care Sector Task and finish Group (System wide care sector group including CCG, both authorities, community and primary care - weekly)
- Shropshire Care Home support team – IPC, Public Health infection control and ASC welfare support calls (weekly)
- Shropshire Care home risk management Team and risk management process (continuous)
- Daily Care home review meeting (ASC Commissioning and Public Health)
- The Care Home Advanced Scheme (CHAS) Enhanced Service
- Covid Council Wide Business Continuity Team (3 x weekly)
- ASC Covid response team (SMT- 3 x weekly)
- CCG Primary Care locality team (initially meeting daily, now 3 x weekly partners invited as required)

Support for Care Homes during Covid 19

There are 120 registered Care homes in Shropshire with 3585 CQC registered beds. Shropshire has the highest number of beds for a rural authority in the region, and the 5th highest overall in the West Midlands. The only authorities with higher bed numbers have large conurbations, significantly higher population numbers and much greater population densities. Shropshire Council Adult Services instigated practical support for care homes in response to the Covid 19 crisis at the beginning of March '20 this involved support from ASC and public health practitioner support.

As a system we recognise and identify that homes have specific issues that require specific support and that Group and larger homes may not need same level of support, so a personalised approach is needed.

- Working in close collaboration with Telford and Wrekin Council, staff resources were identified in both authorities to make contact and support contracted care homes.
- Calls were made routinely on a regular basis to suit each home, the main aim of the calls was to make a general check on the home' welfare, to understand any capacity issues and their individual response to Covid-19 and approach to new admissions.
- The calls provided homes with an opportunity to discuss any issues and ask questions.
- Care homes all closed to visitors at the beginning of March to protect vulnerable people as much as possible.
- At this time there were several queries about provision of PPE, food and other supply shortages and staffing issues, with homes being signposted to guidance where available and given reassurance where needed.
- Working with Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire Partners in Care (SPiC), the local voice for the independent adult social care sector, we developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) as a means of communicating widely with the sector, updated daily at first, the FAQ provided a source for general national and local information, to augment the individualized support homes received in 'welfare' calls.

By April there was a focus on establishing wider system involvement, to develop a shared understanding of the type of support care homes need and a shared response to emerging national guidelines; working together to maximise resources, identify gaps and avoid duplications and to ensure targeted and consistent messaging. The Shropshire care home support team was established to formalise and continue the outbreak and welfare core process. A daily review meeting addresses the needs of care homes. The daily SitRep is received from Public Health England. The data and actions inform the work of the Shropshire care home support team.

This work has continued to develop, expanding to include all registered care homes in Shropshire and the local monitoring and support of homes with confirmed or suspected outbreaks, once they have been 'stepped down' from Public Health England. Arrangements have been formalised with the establishment of the Care Home Support Team made up of staff from Adult Social Care, Contracts Team and Shropshire Public Health, and CCG Infection Prevention and Control Team who link into other CCG colleagues as required- e.g. primary care. There have been 46 Outbreaks in care homes in Shropshire with 21 live at the time of writing. The outbreak status and needs of each home are reviewed at the daily care home review meeting. The actions from this meeting feed into the work plan of the care home support team.

To increase visibility, accessibility and consistency, each care home has been allocated a local authority 'Key Contact' who speaks to the home on a weekly basis or as agreed to suit the home. The focus of the support offered is led by the home', but supplemented by insights from a wide range of information sources, such as NHS Mail and National Capacity Tracker uptake, tracker data and information sharing across the system i.e. PHE, and local PH, IPC, Primary Care Network, Local Resilience Forums etc., to ensure that any issues are identified and addressed appropriately. Where appropriate, issues and

concerns identified as part of this welfare and outbreak monitoring process, feed into the Care Home Risk Management Group for closer scrutiny and analysis. A joint action plan and risk management process has been agreed system wide and is a clear and practical guide to wrap around care home support – as set out in *Appendix A*.

Risk Management

To manage emerging risk immediately and effectively as well as a daily Care Home review between Public Health and Adult Social Care, we have a Care Home Risk Management Group, which meets on a weekly basis to manage risk assessment and mitigation of all Shropshire care homes through the analysis of information from a range of sources. The basis of this is Shropshire's long-established risk management processes and baseline risk assessment, which includes core areas such as CQC inspection status, safeguarding and MDT concerns, professional concerns log and formal complaints procedures etc. The baseline risk assessment has been expanded to include specific COVID related risks including data on staffing, PPE and outbreaks. The further information is gained through capacity tracker data, PHE outbreaks information, IPC information and soft data from the outbreak and welfare calls to each home, to provide a complete picture risk matrix. Mitigations and actions for each home are agreed, with signposting and referral to appropriate areas of the system as required, including workforce support (redeployment from system), IPC and PPE risk (ILP Team engagement and LRF PPE processes), health protection (outbreak control measures, IPC and testing train the trainers) and business viability risk (referral to commissioners for appropriate response on an individual home basis). Outcomes and resulting actions from this weekly risk analysis process are monitored closely through daily information dashboards/sitreps/PHE, reporting/admissions data and the daily care home review meeting. The risk Management process links to the whole system though referrals and actions as required. The process map in Appendix B is a diagrammatic representation of the process.

Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Care Sector Group – Social Care, Primary and community health support to care homes

Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Care Sector Group has been established to ensure an integrated approach to supporting care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meeting weekly, the group has representation from both CCG's, both local authorities, Shropshire Partners in Care (SPiC) and Shropshire Community Health Trust. Detailed work has taken place to ensure that the individual requirements of partners are collated into a single comprehensive work plan. The work plan includes the specific requirements around primary and community health support to care homes and covers key elements of the system response, including single point of referral for homes, regulatory compliance and support, IPC and PPE, workforce support, staff and resident testing, and communications and engagement.

In relation to the 1st May guidance, The CCGs, have been working with all primary care and community providers in Shropshire, to ensure that care homes have more frequent contact with primary care and timely access to clinical advice, including support for care home residents through personalised care and support planning as required. To facilitate this, every Shropshire care home now has a nominated clinical lead within general practice. The clinical lead acts as a link person for each home providing consistent oversight, with weekly check-ins and involvement in arrangements for medication reviews and care planning, including collaborative decisions around hospital admissions and end of life care planning as required and includes:

- Advanced Care Planning / ReSPECT / DNR agreements
- Other specifics to consider adding about the MDT (depending on detail required)
- Medicines Management & optimisation / pharmacy – support provided by the CCG medicines management team - CCG Medicines Management Care homes team are being aligned with the PCNs to provide named clinical pharmacist and pharmacy technician support with structured medication review and general supply and medication queries. The team will also have embedded

clinical pharmacist support in the MDT. MPFT will be providing access to specialist pharmacist advice for LD, EMI and general mental health

- Links with dementia specialist staff (esp. regarding EMI homes)
- Named clinical leads for care homes and an assigned clinical lead to the Care sector focused Covid 19 system wide task and finish group.

Primary and community services work with the care home to identify those patients, at the highest risk, including but not limited to those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 symptoms. Wherever possible, support for patients will be through a multidisciplinary team (MDT), which will be facilitated by the introduction and use of remote monitoring of patients using pulse oximeters and other equipment.

Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Care Sector Group have mapped the current primary and community care provision to support care homes and key actions that are required are included in the Care Sector Group Action Plan, in summary this includes:

- Modelling how the Shropshire Community Health Trust Neighbourhood Teams (MDT) model can be expanded across STW and fully integrate with primary care
- Refining how the neighbourhood teams prioritise and wrap around patients
- Enhancing work on individual care plans including end of life plans
- Expand the scope of medication reviews to incorporate the full neighbourhood team- this to include on hospital discharge
- Implement new tools to map need and demand to highlight capacity needs in local areas
- Support with IT and IT connectivity to support remote working, virtual rounds etc

This work will continue to develop, with progresses being monitored against the key milestones identified in the action plan. The CCG will provide regular 'sitrep' data to NHSE/I to understand the support being provided to care homes and the coverage achieved across the locality. The work of the Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Care Sector Group will continue to be reported to and monitored by Silver command.

Financial Support

At the start of the pandemic, in recognition of the challenges that care providers would be likely to face, Shropshire Council wrote to all providers to offer assurance, support and flexibility in how care could be delivered. At the beginning of April, following guidance from ADASS and the LGA, further correspondence set out the way in which additional finance would be provided to specifically support the additional cost incurred by care providers due to Covid 19. Our engagement with providers confirmed that they were incurring significant additional costs in relation to the purchasing of PPE, agency staff, funding for staff who were unable to work and other financial challenges. The decision was made to provide the funding as a one-off payment as there was clear evidence of an immediate need to support cash flow. In the week commencing 13th April, all County care homes the Council contract with, received a one-off payment, representative of an additional 10% of their contract value (at 31.3.20) for 12 weeks – this included joint contracts with the CCG. In addition, the Council made a further committed to pay care home invoices within 5 working days during the pandemic, rather than on the usual 30-day terms, the Council is also paying for 2 weeks in advance and 2 weeks in arrears.

Support to providers that the local authority has contracts with			
	Domiciliary care	Residential care	Other provision
Support being offered	784,490.74	1,285,820.22	323,003.81
Total spent to date	2,393,314.77		
Support to providers that the local authority does not have contracts with			

	Domiciliary care	Residential care	Other provision
Support being offered	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total spent to date	0.00		

In May, following consultation which started in February 2020 with individual care homes and SPiC, Shropshire Council wrote to the market to confirm uplift arrangements for 2020-21. These arrangements are in addition to, and entirely separate of, the Covid-19 support described above. In order to utilise our limited resources to the greatest effect and support a sustainable market, the decision was made to uplift the lowest paid end of the market, resulting in a 2% uplift to any placements that fall below the determined average weekly rate, with no uplift awarded to providers already receiving at, or above, the average rate. This uplifted rate is lower in terms of percentage than some neighbouring authorities however Shropshire Council base rates are in general higher and lowest rates were automatically uplifted. For example, domiciliary care lowest rates have been automatically uplifted from £14.95 to £16.50 whilst highest rates have remained the same. This is in order to support sustainability at the lowest paid end of the market. In anticipation of further guidance from Government, and in order to ensure a timely response to care homes in need, preparatory work is already being undertaken to understand and plan the allocation of Covid-19 IPC Grant Funding for care homes as part of our care home resilience planning. In addition, the Councils general information on business resilience and grant funding is shared across all providers and the Council response individually to every provider highlighting financial risk with targeted advice.

Testing

In response to the need to expand our local testing offer we now have new pathways available to support patient/care home resident and key worker testing.

There are four clear pathways:

1. Symptomatic staff
2. Asymptomatic staff
3. GP referral of symptomatic residents
4. Train the Trainer

Care homes have been tested however to build in resilience and future proof for further testing requirements, all Shropshire care homes will have received training to allow staff to test their own staff and residents as required by the beginning of June

Accommodation

In Shropshire we have a good track record of supporting people to go 'home first' when they come out of hospital, with a very robust domiciliary care market which has increased its capacity in the Covid 19 crisis. In response to the need to have specific accommodation to support people who may not be able to go home and have a positive diagnosis Shropshire Council commissioned 24 Covid recovery beds from April, we also have 24 Discharge to Assess beds which have been increased due to the pandemic.

Workforce support

We are working with our care homes to ensure that they are not left without enough staffing through this crisis. Through our risk management process and information from the National Tracker we can see where care homes are struggling with staffing issues. When a staffing issue is identified we contact the home to offer staffing support. We have an MOU in place with care homes so that if the need arises, they can have staff deployed into their organisation from the STP system. Staff are allocated to a single care home and not moved until they are no longer needed, they do not move between homes.

Gaps to highlight

Technology and Infrastructure – A plan for use of technology is required. There is a requirement for support to care home in terms of technology including free Wi-Fi for 6 months. It is noted that some practices are still having difficulty delivering video consultations due to weak WIFI signals as well as some equipment shortages (and probably training and support issues too). Also some Care Homes are unable to utilise virtual training options for IPC. A solution to this could be the provision of 4G enabled tablets that could be loaned out to homes as well as sorting the IT connections. we are undertaking a piece of work with all homes to understand their capability and need to inform support and investment

CHAS- there is a discussion on Monday 18th May between Primary Care, Medicines management and Commissioner to fully ensure that CHAS meets the needs of this interim model and is extended to cover all CQC registered care homes and a full specification is in development

Change in traditional care arrangement – Care homes may need support in understanding the need to work differently in terms of using IT.

Capacity within General Practice to deliver the requirements – using an MDT approach with the support of the CCG medicines management teams should reduce impact on practices.

Testing capacity – As set out in the letter from the DPH we have encountered several problems with the national programme

- 1) Swab kits not being sent out in a timely fashion with no means of ensuring homes are kept up to date about when the delivery might be
- 2) Swabs kits not being collected at times when it was agreed they would be collected, and sometimes on multiple occasions
- 3) Long delays in results turnaround/no results being given and swab test having to be repeated.

Unfortunately, this can mean repeating avoidable investigations for vulnerable residents. There is currently no means for escalation of system wide issues regarding this programme in terms of a key agency/contact with responsibility

Planning and information - We have encountered issues with constant changes from central government impact significantly on system capacity, particularly when the local system are not aware of these changes before the public and are expected by citizens to have implemented processes and have a complete understanding of criteria and requirements before they are released from central government. This undermines the public confidence in the local system and could be avoided with a more structured and planned approach from central government to the COVID-19 response which is shared with system partners prior to being released in the public domain to allow for planning processing and action to take place.

We would respectfully request that it be noted that the accompanying template has been completed with information available however due to 50% of care homes not yet completing it the information is not a full picture for Shropshire and whilst we have offered explanations around each section we would consider the information to be a draft pending full completion of data by the care homes. Care homes are being contacted again to remind them of the importance of this data.

Overall, Shropshire CCG and Shropshire Council is confident system wide that we have been robust and effective in our response to Care Homes during the Covid 19 outbreak and that we worked with the market proactively from the beginning. We are confident also that we have strong and effective partnerships and good mechanisms in place.

Yours sincerely

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Enclosures:

Appendix A – Action plan for care homes
Appendix B– Risk management flow chart