

Coronavirus Covid-19 and adult social care in Staffordshire

Message from Dr Richard Harling, Director for Health and Care (24 April 2020)



Given the significant impact Covid-19 is having on the care sector, I thought it would be helpful to share a regular update on the situation and how we can support you.

I will use these updates to draw particular information to your attention, describe key pressure points, outline the support available to you in these unprecedented times and share good news.

I would like to start by thanking you and all of your staff for the tremendous effort you are putting into maintaining continuity of services and the support you are giving to the most vulnerable Staffordshire residents in such challenging circumstances.

Since the start of the pandemic we have tried to support you with:

- A dedicated helpline (0300 111 8050) and email address ascincidentmanagement@staffordshire.gov.uk for providers to use for as long as is necessary throughout the course of the current pandemic.
- Emergency supplies of PPE and ensuring providers who have most need can access it. We have distributed over 400,000 individual items since the start of the pandemic and we have ordered more to meet an increase in anticipated demand over the next 12 weeks.
- An extra £13.6m funding to help the sector. We have been identifying how we can best distribute national government funding as fairly and proportionately as we can to reduce risks to cash flow and support financial sustainability of businesses over this immensely challenging period. This includes an enhanced 2020-21 discretionary fee uplift for contracted services in light of additional pressures from Covid-19.
- Support to complete risk assessments, develop business continuity plans and help ensure continuity of care for the most vulnerable and support the NHS to free up hospital beds, whilst having to adapt to pressures created by higher staff absences.
- Been building up staged business support to be responsive to business needs. This includes additional workforce capacity that can be deployed through our ICare volunteering scheme and developing joint processes with the NHS to directly support organisations who are in greatest need of support.

- Dedicated webpages, signposting providers to national guidance updates and communicating how this guidance is being implemented locally, so that providers are informed and can keep the people they care for as safe as possible.

This effort is ongoing, as we predict the impact of the pandemic will influence the way in which we operate for some time to come. We will continue to flex the support available based on feedback and intelligence we are gathering from the market.

This week, I would like to draw your attention to the following:

- The challenges of sourcing and ensuring safe and appropriate use of PPE in line with HM Government national guidance is proving to be a consistent source of concern for providers. We have developed a bespoke [PPE webpage](#) to help providers navigate through this guidance and to source information on our [Adult social care PPE distribution procedure](#). There have been many additions and alterations to these guidelines over recent weeks. For example, this week in particular has seen key changes in national guidance to give providers more clarity over sessional and re-use of PPE and on the application of risk assessments. To facilitate providers to work through this, we have produced a summary of the national PPE guidance and quick reference guides on the safe use of PPE in care home and home care settings to cover direct care, PPE use in communal settings and guidance when there is sustained transmission of Covid-19 infection within a care home. These documents are all available on the [PPE webpage](#).
- The [Adult Social Care Action Plan](#) was published on 16 April. As part of the commitment within this, starting on Monday 20 April, we welcomed in Staffordshire the introduction of workforce testing available at Stoke City FC and Burton Albion FC. This prioritises patients, NHS and social care and other frontline staff key services e.g. fire & rescue and police (and members of their household) to support frontline capacity. Please be aware that for greater test accuracy, tests must be undertaken within the first 4 days of illness (from the point at which symptoms first started). It is also important to note that staff have been turning up without prior appointment for this testing and have had to be turned away. Please see further details on our dedicated [Staff testing and infection control](#) webpage for the process staff need to follow to book a test.
- 145 providers across care homes and home care organisations are currently using NHSmail or have separately accredited their emails as secure with NHS Digital. A number are also being supported onto the local Office 365 NHS accredited email system imminently. At this point in time, we would strongly encourage all care homes and as many home care providers (who currently do not have access to an NHS approved secure email) to make the most of the free Covid-19 access to NHSmail that is on offer to support secure email communications and access to Microsoft Teams, allowing video conferencing with NHS providers. We have a range of information available to support providers on our [Enhancing care provider communications during the Covid-19 outbreak](#) webpage.

- We have this week communicated information to care homes about community pharmacy stocks of end of life medications and updated guidance on visits to residents receiving end of life care on our [Information for care homes](#) webpage.
- All care homes are asked to use the national [Capacity Tracker](#), which captures information on number of beds, number of vacancies; whether homes are open or closed to admissions (care homes only), number of Covid-19 residents and workforce / staffing levels (care homes only). This information is used to generate daily reports for the government to inform national policy. It does not replace local brokerage portals for placing new residents. Neither does it replace local systems for supporting care homes – for example with advice, PPE or staffing. It is not possible for local authorities to stop requests for information.

Whilst we continue to plan for as many potential scenarios as possible, we will try to ensure that our actions are flexible, responsive to national changes, fair and co-ordinated with the NHS and others.

Over the next few weeks we will start to think about how the care sector will operate in the wake of the pandemic and would value your thoughts on this issue.



Dr Richard Harling, Director of Health & Care