

Coronavirus COVID-19 and adult social care in Staffordshire

Message from Dr Richard Harling, Director for Health and Care (8 June 2020)



I would like to start this update as I have previously to reiterate my continued appreciation of providers and your staff for the invaluable role you are all playing and for your ongoing determination and resilience.

After a particularly challenging time, especially in care homes, it appears that the number of reported PHE outbreaks in care homes have reduced compared to previous weeks. The effort this has taken care homes, the Council, Public Health England and our MPFT and CCG partners has been substantial. Care homes have worked tirelessly and risen very positively and proactively to this challenge and I would also like to thank Staffordshire Association of Registered Care Providers (SARCP), which has supported its members in this effort.

Covid-19 testing and 'Test and Trace' for adult social care in Staffordshire

At this point in time the government-approved antibody testing process has not yet been confirmed. We will issue more information on availability and accessibility of this as soon as we are able to.

On 27 May 2020, the Government announced the launch of a new national [Test and Trace](#) service. Local authorities will have a key role in supporting this through identification and management of outbreaks in settings such as workplaces, housing complexes, care homes, schools and local communities. This will require co-ordinated communication across a range of different bodies (including district and borough councils) to support timely and appropriate actions where outbreaks are reported.

Please be aware that this builds upon and does not change the process already in place for testing and reporting of Covid-19 across adult social care and our response to that. It does however have implications in relation to staff who have been contacted through the national Test and Trace service as being in contact with a confirmed Covid-19 positive case in the community or through a co-worker whilst not wearing PPE or through a potential breach in their PPE whilst providing personal care (please see the recent guidance / practice updates on the management of exposed workers at the end of this weekly update for further information).

Additional new regional testing centre in Stafford

As part of the national Test and Trace service everyone who has symptoms must self-isolate for seven days and book a test.

A new Regional Testing Centre is available at the Bet365 stadium in Stoke on Trent and a further Regional Testing Centre will open soon at Beaconside in Stafford. All members of the public will be able to book a test here. This is an addition to the Covid-19 testing specifically for care homes.

If any of your staff members are contacted to say they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 then they must self-isolate for 14 days.

PPE and infection control

In our latest Adult social care PPE distribution procedure (available on [the PPE page](#)), we referred to a new PPE Portal announced by the health secretary. We understand that invitations are being sent to small care homes (24 beds or less) and home care providers (99 clients or less) to register on the online [PPE portal](#) (otherwise referred to as the 'Clipper System') to order source PPE. This is part of a roll-out of a national pilot of the system. We understand that large social care providers aren't currently being invited to use the portal as they are considered more likely to be registered with a wholesaler and separate arrangements have been in place to secure supply through wholesalers. However, as the portal is acting as an emergency top-up route, small health and care providers should use their business as usual routes first, including wholesalers, if they use them.

The Council continues to maintain arrangements for providing emergency PPE supplies to all social care providers. These can be collected from the locations in each district/borough through prior arrangement. If you are unable to collect your PPE, please email ascincidentmanagement@staffordshire.gov.uk and you will be contacted by an officer to discuss delivery of PPE.

Please note that we have recently posted product alerts on a number of product lots of the Cardinal Health Type IIR face masks (affecting both the quality of their ties and nose strips) and a small batch of Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks (identified as not meet the expected product standard). Please see the PPE Alerts section on our [PPE webpage](#) for further details.

Heat health risks and Covid-19

The recent warm weather brings with it additional considerations in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic for both service users who are symptomatic and/or have tested positive for the virus - and for staff who are wearing PPE. In response to this, Public Health England (PHE) have developed:

A [Beat the Heat: Coping with Heat and Covid-19](#) leaflet which has general advice targeted at the general public on how to stay safe in hot weather. Whilst this is very general, it provides useful tips on helping to keep service users cool in their own homes and also for staff to help look after themselves in the heat.

A checklist to help care homes keep residents safe from high temperatures during the Covid-19 pandemic (see our [Information for care homes](#) page).

To support this, PHE advises that social care providers:

- Ensure the suggested practical actions are understood by their staff
- Ensure hot weather actions and policies take account of risks from Covid-19 and related policies (i.e. shielding, cohorting and self-isolation guidance) and that they understand the increased risk of service users of overheating indoors.
- Understand that fear of Covid-19 should not prevent action on heat in relation to the care of older and more clinically vulnerable groups at higher risk from high temperatures (e.g. those with diabetes, Parkinson's disease, lung conditions, kidney disease and severe mental illness) and those who are symptomatic / have tested positive for Covid-19.
- Are aware of the Heat-Health alerting system which runs annually from June 1st to 15th September. To sign up for the alerts, please email the Met Office at: enquiries@metoffice.gov.uk with the subject line "Hot weather alerts".

National Capacity Tracker

All care homes need to continue to update the Capacity Tracker daily in relation to their active Covid-19 status (both current suspected and confirmed cases) and key business continuity information (including their PPE status, workforce status, bed vacancies, whether they are open or closed to new admissions). It is equally important to report no change or no issues as it is to report issues regularly so that we know that businesses, their residents and their staff are fine, and we know where the pressure points are and where support needs to be targeted.

Completion of the Capacity Tracker is a requirement for access to the £600 million government grant below, so all care homes need to be registered with and regularly using the system.

Government infection control funding for adult social care

Staffordshire has been allocated £9.9million of the £600 million government grant. The allocation is due to be received and allocated in two instalments:

- 75% is for care homes based on their size with £1000 allocated per bed.
- The other 25% is for allocation to all social care providers according to local need. Reducing workforce infection levels and limiting staff movement are likely to be a top priority locally for this.

There are a large number of conditions from the government associated with this grant for both the Council and social care providers. This does mean unfortunately that there will be significant admin associated with making payments.

The Council has submitted a Care Home Support Plan as part of the conditions for receiving the grant. This describes how we will maintain and strengthen:

- Daily reviews of all care homes using Capacity Tracker information and additional local intelligence.
- Training in infection prevention and control.

- Clinical support.
- Testing.
- Intensive support for those care homes that experience outbreaks.
- Arrangements to reduce the movement of staff between care homes as far as possible and for quarantine where required.

Free Facebook portal video calling devices

Last week, we also posted an exciting offer of free Facebook Portal video calling devices for contracted Staffordshire care homes to keep on our [Information for care homes](#) web page. These will support video consultations between residents and their families and friends and with medical teams and social workers. Their beauty is that they are portable and simple to set up. We have had a lot of interest in this and over 30 items have already been allocated, but if you haven't already contacted us, please do so as we want to ensure we distribute all the devices we have received and there are further items available.

Care Act Easements

The Council took the decision to implement [Care Act Easements](#) in line with the Coronavirus Act 2020 and therefore temporarily introduced a streamlined Covid-19 assessment form and suspended routine annual reviews.

We now have improved staffing capacity and therefore are no longer operating under "Care Act Easements" and are providing full Care Act Assessments and annual reviews.

We will continue to review staffing capacity and the demand pressures for adult social care services, and care act easements will only be reinstated if it is necessary to ensure the sustainability of adult social care services to protect Staffordshire's most vulnerable residents.

Other recent key guidance / practice updates for the attention of social care providers

New [COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients and residents in health and social care settings](#) guidance. This indicates what care providers need to do based on the outcomes of testing and of contact tracing and is referred to in the earlier 'Test and Trace' section of this update.

[Mental Capacity Act \(2005\) \(MCA\) and deprivation of liberty safeguards \(DoLS\) during the Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic additional guidance:](#) This refers to additional guidance on testing and consent; provision of life-saving treatment; specific advice for care homes (including around hospital discharge to a care home) and; emergency public health powers around isolation of symptomatic individuals who are not following public health advice.

Updated advisory [Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#). This indicates that extremely vulnerable individuals should continue to take precautions but can now leave their home if they

wish, as long as they are able to maintain strict social distancing. It also includes considerations for individuals in long term care facilities.

CQC [Delegating medicines administration](#) guidance. It provides information for when healthcare professionals may delegate certain tasks to care workers, in what circumstances and outlines the necessary training and support required to support this role.

Public Health England [Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19](#) This reviews different factors associated with Covid-19 mortality across different variables, including age, gender, ethnic group, occupation and it also has a section specific to care homes. It is not able to account for the impact of stringent infection control measures on these risks and we would welcome further data in future on the impact that such measures would have.

Please send us your success stories if you would like me to share them in future updates by sending further details to our Health and Care Engagement mailbox: healthandcare@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Thank you again for everything you are doing to support vulnerable people in Staffordshire.

Dr Richard Harling, Director of Health and Care