



Department of Health & Social Care
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Chief Executive
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29 May 2020

Dear Sirs

1. COVID-19 Care Home support

- 1.1 Westminster City Council is committed to working in partnership with the borough's Care Homes who have a vital role to play in protecting vulnerable people during the COVID19 pandemic. This letter sets out at high level the support arrangements that are currently in place locally to support Care Homes to protect their staff and residents.
- 1.2 Working in close collaboration with local Care Homes and health partners, Westminster is determined to ensure that each resident is getting high quality care in the most appropriate setting for their needs, with the appropriate levels of infection control and equipment in place.

2. Local Arrangements

- 2.1 In Westminster each day every Care Home in the borough is contacted and asked about their current status with regards to their residents, staffing, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and to check infection control processes are in place and being followed. These calls are also used to ensure that any new guidance or support mechanisms have been communicated and incorporated. The information from these calls is logged on a daily situation report to ensure clear understanding of changes as they occur, to help target interventions and to observe trends.
- 2.2 The information gathered from the Care Homes is later reviewed in a daily meeting attended by officers from Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Group, safeguarding and Council Commissioners. These meetings review the information collated and agree support arrangements, or interventions that are needed to support individual homes or the sector more widely.
- 2.3 The arrangements for supporting Care Homes have been in place since March, and the Council is confident that providers are working diligently to ensure infection control measures are followed and appropriate guidance and support is being sought when required.
- 2.4 The Council has worked with Care Homes closely to ensure sufficient levels of PPE are available and has supported homes with supplies when needed. More recently the Council and the CCG have been working together to support Care Homes with access to testing when nationally available routes have been difficult to access or navigate.

- 2.5 Although there has been an undertaking from Central Government that testing would be available to Care Home residents and staff in practice testing has been difficult to access and lack of access to testing remains the biggest single challenge to supporting Care Homes.
- 2.6 The Council is aware of the financial challenges that care homes face and has put in place a local Supply Chain Resilience Forum to create a consistent process to deal with those providers who signal distress as a result of COVID-19. The establishment of the Forum followed an extensive communication to the marketplace about the various relief mechanisms available and the process they should follow if despite these, they became unable to meet their contractual obligations or face significant financial risks.
- 2.7 The Council has worked with care homes to set in place arrangements to support infection control and minimise risk to residents. Whilst there is currently sufficient capacity in the system there are also additional community-based beds commissioned to support residents prior to admission into a care home. These beds can be utilised when needed to ensure that when residents transition from hospital to a Care Home they are COVID negative.
- 2.8 The Council is working with Care Homes to support with staffing shortages and has recruited and trained redeployees and has recently partnered with Proud to Care to support people into Social Care roles. An initial pilot is working with Care Homes to help match care staff to existing vacancies.

3. Health Partners

- 3.1 During the crisis the Central and North West London CCGs have worked with the Council to support our borough's Care Homes. The information gathered from daily calls to Care Homes is shared between the organisations and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), which is used to inform targeted interventions and ensure that the appropriate level of clinical support is identified and promptly made available. When a comprehensive intervention is required the Care Home Support team commissioned by the CCG is called upon by the LRF to assist the home either through direct support or facilitating access to specialist support or resources.
- 3.2 The CCG has enhanced a range of functions to ensure they are available when they are needed including after hours and weekends. This includes primary care, pharmacy and specialist clinical support, to offer a comprehensive range of health interventions to assist Care Homes. Our Health Partners are currently helping with access to testing and have provided training to enable Care Homes to undertake their own testing. Training and education is being regularly provided to support with the use of PPE, adherence to guidance and the implementation of infection control measures.

4. Pan London Approach

- 4.1 Across London we are working closely with ADASS to ensure a system approach and supporting completion of daily returns to inform the London wide Market Information Tool (MIT). The tool was developed by London ADASS to support the delivery of our Care Act duties and was quickly adapted to establish a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of London adult social care markets (home care and care homes) during the spread of COVID-19 at local, STP/ICS and regional levels.
- 4.2 The daily survey includes information on:
 - Prevalence of COVID-19 and associated mortality
 - Actual and true availability of supply
 - Discharges from and admissions to acute care
 - Staff availability
 - Details of PPE stock
 - Access to testing
- 4.3 A weekly regional Care Homes Oversight group was established 07th May co-led by the Chief Nurse and London ADASS Vice Chair. The objectives of the Oversight Group are to:

- Oversee roll out of key elements of the primary and community health service-led Enhanced Health in Care Homes programme including, but not limited to, access to weekly clinical reviews, medicines optimisation and advanced care planning
- Identify opportunities to support staffing in the care home sector and coordinate any regional response, which may draw upon initiatives across the NHS and local government (Your NHS Needs You / Proud to Care)
- Continue to ensure that all residents are being safely and appropriately discharged from hospital to care homes
- Have oversight and assurance of care home resilience plans, responding to emergent challenges and supporting the care home community
- Have oversight of Regional improvement support, public health and operational challenges using system wide data sources including, but not limited to, outbreaks, mortality, workforce and access to training and clinical in-reach
- Have oversight of the Regional Test, Track and Trace (TTT) across care home workforce and residents, ensuring that 'hot spots' are identified and targeted in a timely manner
- Implement a 'super' trainer programme in care homes based on PHE's recommended approach to infection prevention and control, PPE and testing

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Love', with a horizontal line underneath.

Stuart Love
Chief Executive