



Via Email:
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Date: 29 May 2020
Your Ref:
Our Ref: DP/AC/Care Home Support Plan
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Dear Helen Whatley MP

Care Home Support Plan – South Gloucestershire

I am writing in response to your letter of 14th May 2020 regarding support for care homes in South Gloucestershire.

South Gloucestershire Council works very closely with the local care home market with which it has good relationships, evidenced by a long established and very well attended Care Home Forum that is co-chaired by the Local Authority with a care home owner; and a Strategic Care Home Partnership Group encompassing care home representatives and health partners; as well as regular communication with the local care provider representative association.

With almost 50% of care homes in South Gloucestershire having experienced COVID-19 outbreaks, I fully appreciate the challenges that COVID-19 brings to the market. This letter sets out an overview of the current activity taking place and our forward plan for providing further support and resilience across the sector.

I am supported in this South Gloucestershire Care Home Support Plan submission by the CCG Chief Officer and we are working closely together to oversee its delivery through existing governance arrangements.

Health & care system leadership and governance

The current activity to support the market and the Care Home Support Plan is led by our Director for Public Health (DPH) and Director for Adult Social Services (DASS) who are responsible for ensuring effective operational delivery of the plan. They achieve this effectively across the health and social care system by working closely with Primary Care, Community Health and CCG colleagues through the groups outlined in this letter and detailed in the attached plan. Within the Council, reporting on this issue comes through to the Strategic Leadership Team so this ensures that there is direct line of sight to me as Chief Executive.

In order to ensure care market resilience locally we have established a health and care system wide Care Provider Cell for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) and a local multi-agency South Gloucestershire (SG) Care Provider Cell (co-chaired by our DASS and DPH).

This governance arrangement oversees delivery for our local system, namely via:

- a multi-agency care home support plan (appx A) to ensure we have in place a framework to the care home support package;
- a dashboard to support daily and weekly reporting requirements;
- a testing prioritisation process.

We have made arrangements for our care home support plan to be reviewed by our Health & Wellbeing Board and I will also review it with the LRF Chair.

In addition to our strategic leadership group, we have in place a Council daily huddle for oversight of the market and to highlight care homes where additional support may be required, ensuring rapid and responsive support to care homes where required. There is also a daily review process conducted by the community health provider's wrap-around support team and we are intending to align both processes over the coming weeks, ensuring involvement of the NHS Infection Prevention and Control team, community service provider, mental health provider, adult social care, safeguarding and public health teams.

Across the BNSSG system there is close working and alignment of plans and support. The enclosed template includes input from our BNSSG Infection Prevention & Control cell, our BNSSG Community Service provider (Sirona) and BNSSG Primary Care cell. You will see common threads of planning and support activity between each of the LA responses across BNSSG. We are also aligning our operational response to the BNSSG Wraparound Support for care homes and Standard Operating Procedure.

Current activity – wraparound support

The BNSSG health and social care partners are working together across organisational boundaries to support care providers to meet the needs and demands of this new challenge. This is to ensure that they are supported while they continue to provide care for our vulnerable population in different care settings.

The health and social care partners have developed a support package offer, for providers, comprised of five key elements:

1. Joint weekly updates from BNSSG health and social care partners to ensure providers have the most recent news and guidance
2. Access to a new online resource library which is reviewed and assured, weekly, by a newly established Clinical Reference Group
3. Access to a multi-disciplinary Wraparound Support Team (incorporating nurses, end of life care specialists, community pharmacists, learning disability teams, Public Health, infection prevention and control nurses, social workers and Commissioners) via a 24/7 Single Point of Access (SPA) telephone line for support and guidance
4. Rapid mobilisation of support when an outbreak is reported, the initial response being determined by a Local Response Team Meeting
5. Locally based staff from Sirona, the Local Authorities, Primary Care and the Clinical Commissioning Group making regular contact with providers to provide support, establish new relationships and build on what is already working well

Ensuring providers have access to PPE and understand how to use it is a top priority for us. To ensure effective oversight of PPE to all providers we monitor this closely.

In addition, as detailed in our care home support plan (appendix A) we have specific processes in place to ensure the following elements of support are made available:

- Training
- PPE
- Testing
- Workforce
- Isolation and quarantining
- Communications
- Building our scientific understanding and sharing good practice across the sector
- NHS Clinical Support (including medical equipment)
- Oversight and compliance.

The vast majority of care homes in South Gloucestershire are able to isolate residents effectively, but alternative accommodation and care is available where this is not possible.

Financial support

We have already supported our care providers by awarding them a 10% temporary uplift in fees for April, May and June with the uplift paid in advance based on our spend with each provider in early April. This approach will be of some small additional benefit to those providers where occupancy levels fall within those three months. Our Care Home Support Plan sets out the funding that will be allocated to care homes through the Care Home Support Plan allocation from Government. This is of course in addition to a 2% permanent inflationary uplift in fees which we made from April 2020.

In relation to nursing homes the CCG awarded an 11% increase in its FNC rate and 9% of this was backdated to April 2019.

We took the same approach with making temporary fee uplift awards to homecare and supported living services, with interim arrangements also put in place for homecare providers to be paid based on a guaranteed minimum payment reflecting pre-COVID-19 levels of activity. We monitor occupancy levels in care homes within South Gloucestershire and proactively engage with those where vacancy levels are heightened to understand both causation and impact together with planning support available.

COVID

Forward Plan

The collective approach being taken to support care homes across the system sets a good environment within which to take our plans forward and with a good level of confidence. However, there are areas where further planning and development are required – these will be reviewed at both a South Gloucestershire and BNSSG level via the governance structure described above. The population groups of concern (and therefore associated support required for services) include:

- The learning disabilities population within South Gloucestershire
- Those in supported living and also those receiving domiciliary care

As a vulnerable group that has experienced poor outcomes of COVID-19 infections, we are disappointed that care homes and supported living schemes that care for people with learning difficulties are not currently prioritised in the testing protocols.

We will ensure that as our action plan develops we enable staff to attend webinars provided by the Better Care Support Team in order to reflect best practice and the latest evidence available in our local support offer.

We will continue to listen to and engage with the care home sector through the local care provider representative association and their regular provider webinars, and through regular contact with individual care homes. Though some of the responses from providers on the HS tracker system are very positive, in particular we will seek to increase numbers registered on the testing portal and improve access to testing, explore how we can support homes to minimise staff movement between homes, encourage paying full wages while isolating leveraged through the new funding and investigating further the ability and appetite for homes to access additional workforce capacity where this does not represent increased risk of cross-infection.

Our template submission enclosed, setting out the current level of access to the support offer, has formed the benchmark and basis of our forward plan which is set out in our draft care home support multi-agency action plan, which I have referenced throughout this oversight letter. Alongside submitting the attached to you we will be publishing the information on the COVID-19 pages of our website.

Our care homes are the homes of our most vulnerable residents. Keeping people safe is one of our top priorities and we will be redoubling efforts with our partners to support our most vulnerable residents to be as safe as they can be.

Yours sincerely



Dave Perry
Chief Executive

Enclosed:

- **Completed template**
- **Appx A – Multi-agency Care Home Support Plan**