

Dementia Carers Zoom Forum

13th October 2020



1 Present	
Carers	10
Carers in Herts	Sally Stratford – Involvement and Development Worker Dementia and Older People Karen Malone – Involvement and Development Worker Learning Disabilities
Guest Speaker	Kristian Tizzard - Deputy Head of Service, Integrated Accommodation Commissioning Team, Hertfordshire County Council Liz Gormley – Social Worker, Adult Care Services, Hertfordshire County Council Tom Hennessey – Assistant Director Health and Integration Hertfordshire County Council and North Herts CCG
2 Welcome	
	All carers were welcomed, and introductions were completed. Carers were informed that notes would be taken and circulated after the session.
3 Kristian Tizzard, Deputy Head of Service, Integrated Accommodation Commissioning Team, Hertfordshire County Council - Presentation	
	<h2>Care homes and COVID 19</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kristian Tizzard, Deputy Head of Service, Accommodation Commissioning Team ACS• Tom Hennessey, Assistant Director of Health Integration, ACS• Liz Gormley, Social Worker, ACS <hr/> <p>www.hertfordshire.gov.uk</p> 

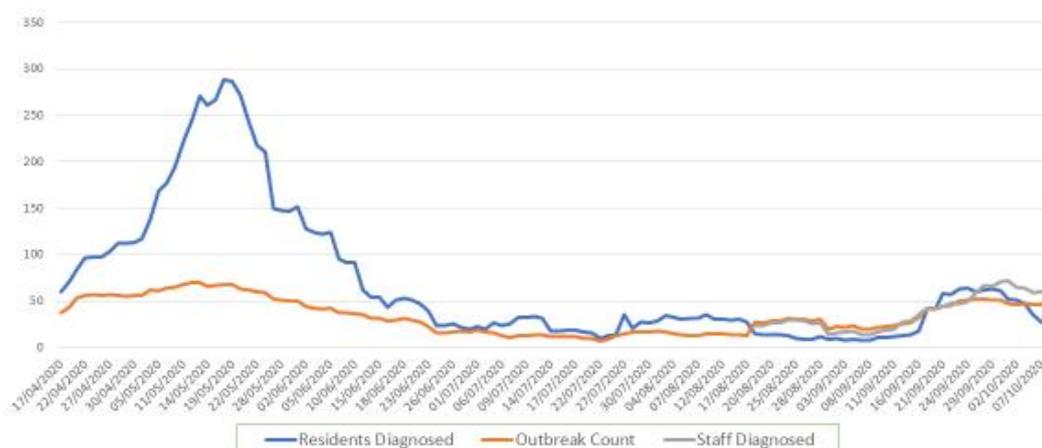
Covering:

- How HCC and partners are working to keep people safe in care homes.
- Explain local care home visitor guidance.
- Discuss Carers questions and experience of residential nursing care and other issues.

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COVID 19 impact in care homes



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Hertfordshire response

- *Commissioned an extra 400 beds to support people leaving hospital/needing emergency care home admission.*
- *Extra funding* for staffing, PPE, home sustainability.
- *Covid19 Outbreak cell* with NHS, Public Health, HCC to rapidly respond to outbreaks.
- *Testing*-all admissions, staff weekly, residents monthly, contact tracing
- *PPE* support for homes.
- *Adult Care Services monitoring*-regular contact (phone and in service)with homes to ensure safe care.
- *Infection control check list* to ensure homes are well prepared.
- *Hertfordshire Provider Hub*-partnership with HCPA, ACS and Public Health-central point of support to all providers with a helpline, training and a range of useful resources and latest council, health and government guidance.
- **Older persons coproduction board** starting work on wellbeing in care homes and impact on carers.

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Framework for Care Home Visits-general

- Department of Health and Social Care released guidance on care homes in July accepting visitors from both families and non-essential visitors.
- Local guidance outlines the approach Hertfordshire will be taking regarding both family and nonessential visitors into care homes.
- Government restrictions have been challenging for many residents and families over the past few months.
- The virus is still circulating in our communities. Any individual visiting a home should be regarded as a potential risk of transmitting COVID-19, so that clear precautions. Can be taken to mitigate risk and enable visits safely.
- *Where possible, we will seek to allow visits from family members and non-essential visitors unless there are circumstances where the virus is circulating in such a way that it makes visiting unsafe.*

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Ethical principles

- Staff and residents should be as safe as possible from infection.
- All dimensions of health and flourishing will be preserved as much as possible (includes enabling safe contact between residents and their loved ones)
- The right to family life (ensuring that visits which can take place safely do, prioritising those most in need)
- Where people have conditions such as learning disabilities, dementia or cognitive decline, visits essential to preventing serious decline or deterioration should be safely enabled if possible.
- The right to visit at end of life Even during lockdown, this right is to be respected and enabled as safely as possible through the use of PPE, testing and other means Infected people and those self-isolating will normally be excluded from visits even at end of life.
- The rights of individual residents to visits must be balanced with the rights of others not to be infected
- Homes, their staff and residents have a legitimate expectation that all visitors will respect these principles and will play their part.
- The use of enforcement measures (e.g. the issue of legal direction to prohibit visitors who persistently refuse to support efforts to protect from infection) will usually be a last resort.

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What does open to non-essential visitors mean?

- Visitors to care homes must maintain social distancing (2 metres).
- Wherever possible all visits should take place in communal gardens or in an outside with social distancing (2 metres).
- Care homes should also consider window visits and drive-through visits.
- Care homes must ensure that they have appropriate levels of staffing to manage visits and to supervise the visits
- Visitors to the home should wear face masks/ face coverings
- Visitors should wash their hands and use hand sanitiser when entering and leaving the care home/outside space;
- Look at introducing a time limit on the length of the visit and have bookable slots.
- Be clear that appointments may need to be cancelled at short notice due to weather or if there was a suspicion of transmission of COVID-19 within the care home.
- Please do not touch during the visits.

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When must homes close to non-essential visitors?

- When the Director of Public Health issues direction-this can be individual or all homes or all homes (linked to national policy). Care homes can appeal restrictions locally.
- For individual homes if:
 - infection control processes do not meet standards.
 - 2 or more symptomatic residents or staff, the home must close.
 - The home can reopen once they have had no new cases for 28 days. Or if the symptomatic staff or residents are negative.

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Reporting care concerns

General concerns about how care is being delivered (*not for urgent/safeguarding issues*) can be reported to HCC at the webpage below:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/report-a-concern-about-an-adult/report-a-concern-about-an-adult-form.aspx>

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4 Questions and comments:

- There have been 500 deaths in care homes in Hertfordshire during the pandemic, this is over half of the deaths in Hertfordshire. We now have this under control and the deaths are low and are staying low but this does not help carers not being able to visit the person they care for.
- The director of Public Health in Hertfordshire has the legal responsibility and ability to close care homes. This is to safeguard the residents and staff of the homes.
- If you are concerned about the care in a home or the visiting restrictions, then please use Hertfordshire County Councils care concern to report them:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/report-a-concern-about-an-adult/report-a-concern-about-an-adult-form.aspx>

- *Are you saying that the council are paying for empty beds to prevent care homes from closing? Is this private homes too?*

We commission 2000 beds and we continued to do this during the pandemic even if they were not occupied. We needed to ensure that there were beds available for people if they were needed, especially when discharged from hospital. To help with the extra expenses required to keep the homes safe, they received a £500 per month payment per bed for infection control.

Commissioners have kept an eye on all homes, including the private ones, and have supported them when needed as we are also worried about them closing.

- *I have only seen my husband once in the garden since March, its very difficult and upsetting. Will I be able to see him?*

Its very difficult for care homes but they have been provided with guidance and they should be going out of their way to provide visits that are suitable and needed, especially for people with dementia. Please ask your home to facilitate a visit. If they are not willing to then we can work with the home to help them provide different visits safely.

- *I had a call last weekend to inform me that my wife was end of life, I was then able to visit for 3 days, as were my sons. Now she is better I am no longer allowed to visit. This does not seem right; I believe that she got better due to the visits. Can individuals raise an appeal about the visiting?*

Yes, they can. The visitor guidance allows visits under the rights for people to have a family life. The best way is to approach the home. If this is not successful then please use the [care concerns](#) form and we will work with the home regarding the matter.

- *Testing visitors – what is being done about this?*

This would be a good idea but testing is a major national problem, so it is currently concentrating on staff and residents. Locally, we only have enough to cover the minimum requirement of testing with GP referrals, residents, and staff.

- *The care company has had problems sourcing PPE, why is this? Why can't the patient be provided with this directly?*

There is no shortage of PPE in Hertfordshire. Please contact the care concerns line and we can support the provider to access supplies.

- *Visiting and calls have been very low. The home says that they are short staffed so cannot manage calls. I am not happy about it but understand they are under a lot of pressure.*

This is not acceptable. They should still be communicating with family and involving them in the care. I am happy to contact and work with the home regarding the importance of involving and including family.

- *My mum is in a treatment and assessment bed in Coventry. We have had a few visits but since the 9th September they have shut their doors, so I have not been able to visit or support my mum.*

The guidance is national guidance so homes, including treatment and assessment units, should be working towards enabling visiting. Assessment community beds rely on family and carers to play an active role in care, so this is a challenging time for all.

- *The care home quarantine for 2 weeks when you are admitted has put us off using a care home. How long will people have to quarantine and have reduced visits for?*

Recently we have seen an increase in people going back into care homes, despite the measures. We cannot predict how long this restriction will be in place.

- *Family members should be essential visitors, they provide a lot of the care and are vital to the personal health and wellbeing.*
- *For families considering care homes, have you thought of having the care delivered in their own home, like live in cares? This has a huge impact financially as they then will not take your home in to account when completing the financial assessment.*

Best to get financial advice on this area, it is very complex. Money advice at Hertfordshire County Council or Age UK Hertfordshire's Information and Advice line are worth contacting.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/money-and-benefits-advice/financial-information/money-advice-unit.aspx?searchInput=&page=1&resultsPerPage=10&view=list>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/hertfordshire/our-services/information-and-advice/>

The government is looking into social reform and is conscious that the current system is unfair to people who have worked hard. It is a national issue with inefficient money in the system. The quality and quality of social care in the last year has upped the ante in status.

- At the beginning of COVID there was a very chaotic approach to care, we did not do enough or stop and think about the visiting in care homes. We have worked hard and improved things, cases are lower, and we are continuously reviewing this. We can instruct care homes to close their doors, but we can only advise them to open the doors and allow visiting.
- *How does all this fit in with Best Interest decisions and how care homes navigate this?*

We work closely with the DoLS (Deprivation of Liberty and Safeguarding) team. It has been very difficult with people with Dementia, especially when they walk with purpose. How can they be self-isolated? It is a large problem and there are no easy answers.

- *Relatives should have keyworker status so they can visit their relative in a care home. We should not only be allowed end of life visits.*

Public Health is looking into this. The issue is testing and the capacity. Tom Hennessy to ask Public Health why this is.

- We have recognised that carers need more support and information regarding visiting and acknowledge that our communication with carers has not been good enough. We are working on this and hope to improve. We have shared the care concerns line today and will share the visitor's guidance with Carers in Hertfordshire to circulate widely.

National guidance for visiting care homes:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes?mc_cid=45ae9774c2&mc_eid=9b7f8bd309&mc_cid=08c7be9fcf&mc_eid=6f67bf861c#fnref:3

7 Closing comments and information

Carers were thanked for attending. The next Dementia forum is on **Wednesday 4th November, 2pm - 3.30pm**. Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust will be attending to deliver and discuss training for carers. This will be an opportunity to shape the training that they deliver now and in the future.
To book a place, please call the office on 01992 58 69 69.