



Department of Health & Social Care

David Pearson CBE, Chair Social Care Sector
COVID 19 Task Force

3rd July 2020

To:

All care homeowners

All care home managers

Local authority chief executives

Directors of adult social services

Directors of public health

Cc:

AOs of clinical commissioning groups

Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Task Force

COVID-19 and staff movement between care homes

I am writing to you as Chair of the new Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce. With many others from across the sector, I will be overseeing the delivery of the measures outlined in the Government's Social Care Action Plan and Care Home Support Package, the latter supported by the £600m Infection Control Fund.

Through my role, I want to do everything I can to support care providers and local authorities, as you strive to protect staff and those in your care from infection, as well as making sure people do not become distanced from family and friends, or other essential services.

At the end of May, all local authorities submitted a care home resilience plan. These plans demonstrated that care home managers and their teams have worked hard, alongside local authorities, to formulate plans, in the best interests of residents and staff.

The plans have given us a great deal of information, both about the good work taking place, and the areas of further support required. We would like to thank all involved for their work in such a short space of time.

One of the issues identified from both national and international research and experience, is the importance of staff only working in one setting at any one time. We now know that many people who have the virus do not have any symptoms and can, without knowing, transmit the virus to

others. As highlighted in the Care Home Support Package guidance, transmission of infection by asymptomatic staff and staff working across care homes, have been identified as key risks in transmitting infection.

For this reason, it is very important for the safety of residents and staff that we take every possible step to reduce staff moving between settings.

We understand many staff have previously needed to work across settings for reasons including covering vacant posts and other staff absences. We recognise it is a difficult task to reduce all such movement. We also know in order to maintain safe staffing levels, agency staff often support care homes, sometimes for a number of homes in their area.

On 15 May 2020, the Government announced the new £600 million Infection Control Fund, introduced to tackle the spread of coronavirus in care homes. An important part of this fund is the ability to pay staff their full wages to remain in one setting. We acknowledge that employees on part-time or zero hours contracts may be anxious about the impact these restrictions may have on their pay and employment. We would ask that you use this funding to ensure staff do not suffer any loss of income. It is also our intention for the fund to be used to support people to stay off work, if advised to do so through the NHS Test & Trace programme.

In view of the risk, we are advising care homes to double check with employees whether they are working in other settings and, if so, to explore options for supporting staff to work in one care home only. We know there are local discussions taking place between providers and local authorities and we hope these conversations are mutually supportive, leading to practical solutions.

We are identifying examples of best practice, which we will share with you as soon as possible to support this process.

We fully recognise the vital contribution and the incredible commitment of social care teams in preventing the spread of COVID-19. I would like to emphasise we do not blame any individual who may have inadvertently transmitted an infection when asymptomatic.

Minimising staff movement between care homes is essential to protecting residents and staff. We ask for your commitment to supporting this to protect everyone living and working in the social care sector.

This virus has had a profound effect on all of us, but particularly care home residents and those who receive care in their own homes. I would like to thank you again for all that you are doing at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

David Pearson CBE

Chair, Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce