Name of meeting:	Lancashire Countywide Care Home Provider Forum		
Venue:	Council Chamber, County Hall, Preston		
Date:	12/11/2026	**Time**:	9:30 am -12:30 pm

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1.	Welcome and introductions	Katie Barnes (forum chair) and Sumaiya Sufi (LCC interim Head of Quality for Market) introduced themselves and welcomed everyone to the forum including visitors with stalls in the foyer. Katie explained her current position as a provider and meeting chair, with request for anyone who would like to join her as a co-chair to get in touch. Katie advised the forum she is able to assist with issues relating to the local authority in a consultancy capacity and provide assistance finding out who to contact but isn't in a position to have any influence regarding individual complaints. A request was made for providers to be given a copy of an organisational structure to help with contacting the right person. Sumaiya confirmed that the Commissioning mailbox can be used for queries to be directed and Commissioning colleagues can try to advocate for a timely response, whilst acknowledging that this may be dependent on processes that need to be followed and risk assessments determining priorities at the front door.
2.	Wendy Mackley and Sarah Whelan – Cold Weather Briefing and Flu	A presentation was shared with advice about cold weather and flu (to be included with the notes). Outline of current statistics demonstrated that the younger population are testing positive for flu highlighting a need for an increase in uptake of the vaccine in working people, who are eligible, to

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		reduce the risk of older people catching flu. It is hoped that posters and leaflets from the ICB will encourage a wider uptake for the vaccine with excess deaths spiking each winter due to flu. This year people who are 16 and over who are homeless are now eligible with request for this information to be passed on. It was confirmed that you can't get flu from the vaccine and the vaccine is needed every year due to changes in the virus. The potential impact that cold weather can have on health was explained including excess deaths which can affect anyone. A temperature under 18 degrees can increase risks and the impacts of cold weather might continue for days and weeks after a cold episode. The Northwest has the highest number of cold related deaths in England. Signing up for cold weather alerts will automatically generate emails from the Met Office in a colour coded system indicating level of impact and staff should take cold weather precautions for both travel and working from home. A set of action cards have been produced which can be shared with the presentation to be shared with staff. Providers were asked to follow advice that is passed on from the local authority in cold weather situations and to communicate this as widely as possible with communication being key in red situations. Kate raised that some issues have arisen with vaccinators not bringing enough flu vaccine to care homes leaving staff to arrange this independently, discouraging uptake. Sumaiya advised there has been more success in areas with links with GPs who have agreed to vaccinate staff at the same time and other strategies can be employed to encourage staff update including time off for staff to get the vaccine during a shift (resources on this to be shared). Sumaiya asked if information on staff uptake could be recorded on the capacity tracker. Providers were reminded to keep on top of boiler maintenance as there has been some feedback from a number of care homes regarding heating not working.
3.	Rachel Lea and Kassim Sonvadi – Infection Prevention	Precautions were shared in relation to acute respiratory infections (ARI) which can be caused by viruses including flu and covid. Data from last year showed ARI to be more prevalent than scabies in care homes. Rachel recommended putting proactive measures in place with flu outbreaks starting earlier, identifying symptoms to help prevent an outbreak.

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		The impact on care homes was covered with the goal to prevent hospital admissions which can in turn lead to other infections. Measures for staff should include staff should having access to guidance to follow the right processes if residents have symptoms, contingency plans for staff absences, checking staff are well before returning to work, staff members being assigned to zones in an outbreak and staff being checked out if they have worked with an affected resident. Standard control precautions can be used, carrying out audits with samples. The importance of handwashing, fresh air from open windows, cleaning schedules, intel from maintenance support and correct use of PPE were also emphasised for preventative measures. E-learning refresher training on the use of PPE is available for care home staff (link can be provided). On the website there is also guidance on cleaning schedules, information that can be printed and displayed and the option for an IPC champion role for regular emails and a drop in once a month.
4.	Sana Din – The Nursing and Midwifery Council	The regulatory body operates across all four countries and has been providing support since 2016. It is an outreach service supporting employers around managing professional concerns, providing advice and free learning sessions. The service has received positive feedback from employers. There is an advice line that can help with decision making in relation to regulatory threshold and help can be given for making referrals, with support for concerns to be sorted locally where appropriate. There are resources on the website for managing concerns and an online tool for making improvements (slides to be shared with QR code in addition to a newsletter with useful information. The approach focuses on public protection, improved practice and what can be learnt. Employers can often manage a situation locally as they know staff best. Many referrals are closed at the screening stage as they can be dealt with locally. Employers are encouraged to look at how to support individuals rather than dismissing them as the person may go on to work somewhere else and the risk goes on to a different environment. Referrals come from a number of sources, often relating to patient care or record management.

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		The council is working on a code of conduct that is going out for consultation at the end of this month and they would like to hear from the public and employers to inform this.
5.	Gavin Bainbridge – Care Quality Commission Update	Following on from flu vaccine information, Gavin confirmed that this would come under the workforce wellbeing quality statement and higher numbers for staff uptake will reflect well when the regulator is looking at a service. Providers raised the challenge regarding reluctance from staff to accept the vaccine even when it is being provided in-house with a feeling that more education and awareness is needed for specific staff groups. Katie reported a higher uptake a few years ago when staff were able to work towards a provider award. Gavin outlined his role within CQC as Operations Manager for Lancashire and South Cumbria and the position in relation to CQC transformation and recent changes including an emphasis on being a preventative service. The plan for the next 18 months is to increase inspections with a national commitment to reducing the age of CQC ratings. Services with the oldest ratings will be on a priority list with a commitment to get to unrated services and aim to get back to providers quicker after improvements are made. It was acknowledged that the bar for good is really high and CQC want to support providers through the regulatory framework. Each inspector will be aligned to a group of inspections. Providers will be given details about their inspector and how it will work in a change for how CQC engage with social care providers, aiming for this to be more manageable with opportunities to spot themes and trends. Gavin confirmed that his team is fully staffed now but still have a large area to cover and will still need to balance providers that are generating risk with providers that have a decent older rating. It was agreed that a move towards designatory inspectors is positive but raised that challenges arise from regular changes. CQC is working on practical guidance on dementia care with practical advice and providers can contribute to this and skills for care work also ongoing (link to be sent to Sumaiya).

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		An external publication with examples of good practice is being worked on and will come out in the next couple of months. Details of the decaffeination project have been shared with reference to other low-cost options to reduce the risk of falls including risk assessments and involvement of activity co-ordinators. Gavin advised that he could come back and talk about the stripped back version of the framework with this being looked at and improvements being made.
6.	Julia Walker – LCC Safeguarding	Katie informed the group she had asked for representation from Safeguarding at the forum to provide regular information on safeguarding and what is being raised locally to help make changes within the sector with many minor incidents being reported that could be dealt with at care home level. Julia confirmed that around 500 safeguarding incidents are reported each week with in excess of 300 that don't meet the criteria. A lot of the provider reports are more likely to be classed as green, low-level incidents, as they are in a safe place, and this has resulted in them being put on a waiting list. This system has now been improved with providers getting a phone call from duty staff with an update on what's being done and a confirmation letter. Providers reported that social workers are now getting in touch and asking for details and seeing an improvement with less cases remaining open. It was raised that ways of dealing with safeguarding can vary between different care homes and different local authorities. Providers agreed that managers tend to be told if in doubt to report it an incident. Julia reported some work is currently being done with CQC on what should be raised and this can be informed by knowing the care act and Katie advised aligned inspection may help with this. It was agreed that providers may be thinking of CQC when reporting incidents and Gavin suggested liaising with the aligned inspector as a lot of lower-level incidents don't need to go to the regulator and evidence can be provided by demonstrating use of the triage model with the local authority.

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		The issue of answers being altered so an incident will change to amber was raised with Sumaiya advising that this adds to the pressure on Adult Social Care whilst acknowledging that providers may feel that it is important to share this information with someone; reporting that new digital processes for sharing concerns and information are being looked into with the front door so this information can go to a quality monitoring officer. In the new system reports rated green will go to the Quality Team providing assurance that a matter will be looked at. It was suggested that work with other councils could be beneficial in this regard as Sefton are currently working on a digital process. Work is also ongoing with other services including district nurses and paramedics to ensure that safeguarding is addressed by everyone rather than being passed on and to reduce the number of times the same referral is sent. Katie raised that people can make unwise decisions and sometimes these are sent though as safeguarding referrals for people who have capacity. Julia reported that detail is key for referrals as chasing missing information creates more work. Provider templates have been created and can be found on the portal which will also make provider led investigations easier with a focus on the person and what they want. Julia confirmed she would attend the provider forum going forward. The email address for safeguarding duty was shared - SGA@lancashiregov.uk - with requests that this is used for general questions but not for raising specific safeguarding incidents.
7.	LCC Commissioning updates	A fully fledged brokerage service is being implemented in a phased way from Monday. The new process will involve social workers doing the care act assessment as before but then the assessment will be shared with Care Brokerage for them to have conversations with individuals about support needed, with information about what's available informally as well as formal services. A provider highlighted a recent situation where a local resident had wanted to come to their care home but they were missed off the provider list. Details of the person to be shared with Sumaiya for this to be looked at. A question was raised in relation to whether Blackpool is being looked at

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		because it is cheaper with Sumaiya advising this is not the case, confirming inhouse providers would be looked at initially before going externally and it would be about the person. Sumaiya outlined the new service which is no longer Contract Management and has been updated to Market Management. Mailboxes have changed in line with changes in roles and remits. Quality email address to be shared with the notes for information, emails sent to the old email addresses will automatically be redirected. Lyndsay Taylor, Paul Charnley and Sue Shannon are Quality Improvement Practitioners with a remit across the market and not just care homes. Care and Support planning guidance has been updated. Slides detail the changes. A question was raised in relation to fee arrangements after LGR. Sumaiya confirmed that LGR is currently on pause and not going to proceed as initially understood. There will be no immediate changes with further information expected in April 2027. A number of providers wished to raise issues around joint funding and FNC in principal. Sumaiya advised she had been meeting regularly with ICB colleagues who have undergone a recent restructure and hoping they will be able to attend the next forum. Katie asked provider colleagues to collate problems about funding so these issues could be addressed out of the forum in a working group involving ICB. Sumaiya advised work is being undertaken by one of the LCC transformation partners on understanding the market as a whole in relation to room rates. This information was relayed by the representative at forum with plans for individual provider updates but there hadn't been enough people to do these sessions. The uplift process is being worked on and Sumaiya will see if the forum can be updated in January. Sumaiya confirmed that the local authority need to abide by a strict democratic processes for cabinet and tend to let people know in January or February. Associated emails should be sent by the end of

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		November with request for care providers to get involved. The budget allocation from central government will inform decisions.
8.	Chair Facilitates Discussion	End dates being given for short term care was queried. Denis advised queries could be put through the portal and to look into with Brokerage and Care Nav. Contact details were requested in relation to redirection of portal queries. Sumaiya advised there is a directory within Commissioning and to look at sending this out with the notes. Matter raised in relation to some social workers advising assessments needed for short-term beds when providers previously told an assessment wasn't required and the subsequent impact on hospital discharge. Sumaiya relayed homes have previously reported that information isn't always up to date with work ongoing to improve information provided by the hospital discharge team and Joan Jacobson to talk to the forum about this in January. Denis to look into this. A provider highlighted that the e-brokerage system in Liverpool looks identical to the one in Lancashire but the Lancashire version requires that the cost be inputted manually. Sumaiya to pass this information on to the Brokerage Team and may be able to get a representative at the January forum. Issue raised by provider receiving a lot of test emails from the e-brokerage support team, agreed to copy Sumaiya in for help with this. Forum dates have been sent out for next year with the next one in January. For forums that are due to take place in the morning a later start time will be looked at. Thursday 21st January (In person) Thursday 22nd April Thursday 13th July (In person) Thursday 4th November

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