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Date: 15 May 2020

Dear Providers

We are writing to you to thank you for your continued support working with some of the most vulnerable residents in Lancashire during what continues to be an extremely challenging time during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following information contained in this letter gives an update on training for PPE, testing in Lancashire and how this work will be prioritised.

Adult Social Care Departments, Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Primary Care and NHS Providers are working together with the Lancashire Resilience Forum for Lancashire to facilitate the support needed to coordinate testing and PPE training in every care home.

Testing

We appreciate that the Government and its agencies such as the Care Quality Commission has already started testing. Your key workers or residents may already have been tested. It is important for us to get comprehensive testing done for staff and residents in each care home in order to co-ordinate the support you and your residents might need to stay safe.

We ask that you continue to use the current systems set up via Public Health England to report outbreaks and to utilise the existing local contact arrangements identified below to request testing, rather than the new national system that has been set up. This is so we as a system, can manage the requests and respond at a local level to better maximise our support for you.

If however you are unable to manage the self-testing process in your care home then we will support by sending in individuals who can conduct the swab tests for you. We appreciate these individuals will not be known to your residents and so absolutely understand that you will expect to accompany them throughout their visit in line with your normal due diligence processes.

Please note that testing of swabs can take up to a week and thus as now we recommend you assume the outcome will be positive until advised of the result and plan accordingly.

Infection Prevention Control Training

There has been a request by the Chief Nursing Officer for England, Ruth May, to provide Infection Prevention and Control training as a matter of extreme urgency to our care home colleagues. In order to assist in the reduction of Covid-19 outbreaks and equip the staff with the knowledge and skills to keep their residents and themselves safe NHS colleagues will be contacting you over the next few weeks to invite you to participate in training which will be delivered virtually. This training will also support care home staff to conduct the swabbing of residents and staff in the home.

Mental Capacity

Footfall within care homes should be minimised to reduce the risk of Covid-19 entering the home. We respect individual's rights and will ensure residents have the capacity to decide if they wish to have a test, equally if residents (or maybe people/individuals) lack capacity safeguarding measures will be in place to ensure any test is conducted in their Best Interests and within the legal framework of the Mental Capacity Act.

Process

Protecting care homes that are currently free of Covid-19 is a vital part of managing the Coronavirus outbreak. The continued attention to ensuring high standards of infection prevention – especially hand and respiratory hygiene, the correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and maintaining environmental cleanliness – will help support this ambition. In addition, a structured programme of testing for all care home staff and residents will identify any asymptomatic carriers so those cases can be managed in the right way. A combination of both regular swabbing of staff and patients and robust infection prevention and control procedures will support care homes to reduce the risk of Covid-19 in these settings.

The process will therefore depend on the Covid-19 status within each care home:

1. Cold Care Home sites (where there is no current outbreak): A "prevent and protect" model will be in place. Care home staff and residents should be tested and supported with robust PPE precautions and high standards of infection, prevention and control. Strict measures should be implemented on social distancing, self-isolation and visits.
2. Hot Care Home sites (where there is a known outbreak -two or more residents): A "protect, contain and support" model will be in place. Staff and residents should be tested and supported with robust PPE precautions and high standards of infection, prevention and control. Isolation wings or sections should be introduced, where possible, within the care home and consideration could be given to quarantining the entire facility with staff remaining on site for extended periods.

3. Discharge into alternative Care arrangements (for residents recovering from Covid-19): A recovery and rapid reablement model will be in place to support recovering patients to return to the care home from other settings such as an Acute Hospital. Testing for individuals will be conducted prior to discharge back to the home. All residents must be treated as Covid positive until test results are obtained. All care home staff must also be tested and supported with robust PPE precautions and high standards of infection, prevention and control. Strict measures will be implemented on social distancing, self-isolation and visits.

Stepping up clinical support

We know it is important that you have good NHS clinical support and so from 15 May you will have access to clinical advice and a named lead who will be in touch with you every week and who can draw in other colleagues when this is necessary to support the management of those who may be at risk of a hospital admission or be ready to come out of hospital. These colleagues as now are also here to help with personalised support planning and any queries or concerns you may have about individual residents.

Please be assured our priority is to keep the care sector, including all who work in it and are supported by it, safe and well. We trust the measures we have outlined above capture this ongoing commitment and meet with your support and co-operation.

If you have any questions arising from this letter please contact us via Contract Management Teams with your query. We will get someone to contact you as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,



Louise Taylor



Amanda Doyle OBE
Chief Officer, ICS, Lancashire & South Cumbria

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