

What matters to people living and working in care homes:

Streamlining Covid-19 guidance for care homes



The issue

In early March 2020, Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups began to grapple with the impact of the rising numbers of people with Covid-19 on the health and care system.

A huge amount of rapidly changing information and guidance was produced for all areas of health and social care, from infection control, to hospital discharges and supporting vulnerable and shielding patients.

Care homes were no exception. As one South West care home owner commented:

“Staff are spending hours and hours a day reading updated and new advice from 26 different [places], so from our point of view I’d like one set of very broad advice with a lot of latitude to allow the managers to do their jobs”.

The solution

Dorset Integrated Care System ‘Our Dorset’ decided to take a proactive approach to managing the information being sent to Care Homes.

“One of the first meetings about our response to Covid-19 included directors from the CCG and local authorities, a care home representative and other relevant organisations from Dorset. We agreed that care homes could be overwhelmed by receiving so much information from different sources and decided that our communications to them should be streamlined,” explains Jo Thompson, Quality Improvement Manager in Dorset CCG.

“We wanted to make sure that trustworthy sources of information were going through the right channels and keep it as simple and easy as possible.”

A local partnership organisation, *Partners in Care*, was asked to coordinate the email, which was sent initially on a daily basis.

Partners in Care are a 'multi-stakeholder partnership' who work to raise the standard and quality of adult social care across Dorset. They offer training and advice to care homes and work closely with Registered Managers of residential and nursing homes to 'understand and help address emerging issues within the sector.' As such, they had an up to date database which meant the email would go to the maximum number of people possible, including care home managers, local CQC teams and LA and CCG colleagues.

The process

A webpage on Dorset Council's website was set up as a central hub to hold the information for care homes.

Information is sourced from a number of national and local organisations including the NHS, Social Care and Public Health. It is reviewed to understand whether the information is essential, or just a 'nice to have' – i.e. do the care homes really need to have this?'

A summary of each topic is included on the webpage, with links to further information so people can find out more.

The page is currently updated 3-4 times a week by the council depending on the amount of guidance, and then emailed by Partners in Care to care home managers and other stakeholders.

The outcome

According to Kate Bake, Partners in Care Manager, while providers still say there is a lot of information, many have fed back that is helpful to have it all in one place, and people know to look out for the update when it comes through.

"Familiarity helps," adds Kate. "People know us from the registered managers network, and they feel comfortable to call us to ask questions or say they don't quite understand. It is also helpful for CCG or local authority colleagues to reference the email when doing monitoring and support calls, asking 'did you get the update about..'"



Top tips

- Use an organisation already networked with care home providers to send out the information
- Sense check what is included – ‘is this useful, relevant and essential or only a nice to have?’
- Include a point of contact for questions

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