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# North Lincolnshire Council

Helen Whately MP  
Minister of State for Care  
HM Government  
39 Victoria Street  
LONDON  
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Church Square House  
30-40 High Street  
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Dear Minister

## Support for Care Homes in North Lincolnshire

In response to your letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> March 2020 I write regarding support to care homes and provide assurance as set out below.

North Lincolnshire Council and the North Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group is committed to working with care home providers and their workforce to ensure that people living in care homes are supported during the unprecedented challenges that Covid-19 presents.

This letter outlines the partnership work taking place across the health and social care system to ensure people are supported and the care home sector is resilient. It sets out our offer of support to care homes and how we will continue this going forward.

North Lincolnshire has a long history of working together with the care sector and we have built on existing partnership arrangements to design our care home support plan.

As a health care and system we have been responsive to supporting the sector and helping them deal with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are 60 registered care homes in North Lincolnshire with 1972 placements registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), employing on average 2250 people. The independent sector provide 59 of these Care Homes with 7 being registered to provide nursing care. The Council runs a facility for short term rehabilitation and reablement on behalf of the health and care system.

Currently there are 1498 people residing in care homes in North Lincolnshire. The care home sector is a mix of small medium enterprises and larger national organisations.

The strategic oversight of the Care Home Support plan is being undertaken by the Director of Adults and Community Wellbeing (DASS) Director of Public Health (DPH) and the Director of Nursing and Quality CCG. The DASS is the responsible decision maker for oversight of sector resilience and compliance with safeguarding duties. The DPH is the responsible decision maker for specialist advice on matters of testing and IPC and the Director of Nursing and Quality is the responsible decision maker for robust clinical arrangements to support care home residents in North Lincolnshire. This group is supported by an operational team designing and delivering on the support plan.

North Lincolnshire has a well-established health and care standards board with representation from public health, community and acute providers, care home and home care agencies. Partners provide mutual support to continue to improve care quality and ensure a culture of high support high challenge across the care sector. The board has been successful in developing a shared approach and consistency for the sector and has been a vehicle for engagement in the development of this care home support plan.

The care home support plan is set in the context of our shared ambitions, strategic principles and operating model as set out in the North Lincolnshire Health and Care Integration Plan.

The care home support plan includes information on how we will support and manage:

- Infection prevention and control
- Covid-19 testing
- Personal protective equipment
- Workforce support, and
- Clinical support

By way of summary narrative the care home support plan covers the following:

### **Support available to all care homes**

- Daily contact by the provider development team to review local data and care home resilience checks against the capacity tracker and other advice and guidance including access to PPE and testing
- Daily telephone contact from the community nursing service focusing on the clinical concerns of residents and establishing if they have had any hospital discharges. All residents discharged from hospital are reviewed within 24 hours by the community response team. If appropriate visits to the care homes from the community nursing team take place
- Training in Infection Prevention Control, End of Life and clinical observations
- The community response team and primary care review residents/patients and ensure advanced care planning is in place.

### **Support for care homes where there is a known or suspected outbreak in either the resident or staff population, increase in numbers of deaths and/or following staffing concerns**

- Contact from the CCG / Public Health IPC nurse to provide specialist advice and support for managing a suspected or confirmed outbreak
- Clinical support via primary care teams and the community nursing service as required for any home with a confirmed outbreak and those with a suspected outbreak. The level of support depending on the number of residents and staff involved, to support environmental issues, isolating residents
- Public Health England telephone advice and support when an outbreak is first declared.

### **Rapid Intensive Support where it is required following significant staffing concerns that may compromise resident safety, significant safety or quality concern.**

- Multi-agency Incident Management meeting called by Public Health England or the Local Public Health team depending on the scale and nature of the incident
- Clinical review of residents via primary care and the community response team to ensure all appropriate actions and oversight is in place
- Specialist Infection, Prevention and Control input and care home site visits must be undertaken in these circumstances
- Support with workforce needs across a graduated approach includes access to NHS staffing if needed
- Alternative accommodation if required

The care home support plan provides further detail and outlines the various partner roles and responsibilities. These arrangements enable partners to continue to build an even stronger understanding of the sector and support in place and address any risks and issues of concern. In addition to the data set we are designing an evaluation process to monitor impact and outcomes for our local residents.

### **Provision of alternative accommodation**

The majority of care homes in North Lincolnshire have the capacity and capability to isolate their residents returning from hospital in line with national guidance. Where this is not possible, health and social care partners make individual arrangements. To build more capacity for the future, we are in the process of commissioning alternative accommodation to support people leaving hospital on a short term basis.

### **Support with finance**

The Council works in partnership with care homes to improve quality and establish and agree the cost of providing care in North Lincolnshire. The fee rate agreed for 2020/21 is a 5.49% increase to the base fee rate, paid from April 2020.

The Council recognises the financial challenges being experienced during this period by the care sector and as such has provided a 'Covid grant' for the April to June period for all North Lincolnshire care providers.

Care providers have also been informed of possible financial additional support, including Business Rate Relief, Small Business Grants and Supplier Relief.

NHS funding is being utilised to support discharge from hospital and to prevent hospital admission.

The Council is currently working towards distribution of the recently announced Infection Control Fund which will provide further assistance to care homes, and on the most effective way to use the 25% of the fund not distributed on a per bed basis. It is expected that the fund will support the sector in all aspects of infection control including increased costs of PPE.

### **Summary and Forward Plan**

As detailed our system partnerships and arrangements are well established. The addition of the strategic care home oversight group complements these arrangements to provide the necessary assurance that the North Lincolnshire care home sector is supported throughout this pandemic. The capacity tracker information demonstrates good engagement with local providers with a positive response to the support offer in place.

There are some ongoing concerns regarding the indemnity issues for the workforce in the event of mutual aid being required, we are seeking advice on how to manage this aspect. This letter will be shared with the sector and the health and care standards board supporting our continued commitment to co-production with the care sector in North Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely



**Denise Hyde**  
**Chief Executive**