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29th May 2020

Helen Whately MP
Minister of State for Care
39 Victoria Street
London
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Dear Helen Whately MP

Rotherham Care Home Resilience Plan

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) and Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (RCCG) are working jointly together to ensure the care market remains resilient through the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery phase. Rotherham has a committed Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) with representation across the system including; Primary Care, RDaSH Mental Health Trust, Voluntary and Community Sector, The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT) Acute and Community Services, RCCG and RMBC. Through this partnership we are providing effective system leadership to oversee a co-ordinated and integrated enhanced support offer to care providers.

This is evidenced in the following key areas;

Governance

A daily care homes group was established from the beginning of April 2020 coalescing expertise from partners across the Integrated Care Partnership. This comprises of members from across the spectrum at both a senior and tactical level, including the Community Physician, medicines management team, GP, commissioning, mental health and learning disability, Continuing Health Care, safeguarding, Public Health, Chief Nurse, Director of Adult Care and Housing and other allied professionals.

This group discusses all care home activity based on a daily dashboard reporting by exception on care homes which have reached escalation levels on our risk register. This approach informs proactive and targeted tactical support to care homes where issues or potential issues have been identified. Issues that are not able to be resolved through this group are then escalated to the Place Covid-19 Gold meeting of our ICP representatives at executive level.

Market Analysis

Since 19th March 2020 the Council's Adult Care commissioning team have been undertaking regular calls with all adult care home establishments. Dedicated officers are assigned to all care homes, to provide a supportive role and to gain key data relating to market resilience. The assigned officers have long standing relationships with the establishments and include several individuals who have formally undertaken the care home manager role, thereby ensuring that they can impart expert knowledge to the care homes and are seen by them as a credible asset, rather than merely a data gather. The effectiveness of the relationships with the care homes means that information obtained from the care homes since 19th March has informed two reporting templates:

- 1: A capacity dashboard, which supports system partners to understand the current vacancies across Rotherham, and
- 2: A Covid-19 situation report (sitrep) which includes details of suspected and confirmed cases and suspected and confirmed deaths from Covid-19, staffing levels including percentage reduction, PPE requirements and whether the service remains safe. All providers are given a RAG rating of Green, Amber or Red based on this data to support in the implementation of contingency planning and the ongoing development of our Care Homes Action Plan.

From the data collected our local market analysis in relation to the impact of Covid-19 to date is as follows:

Older People

There are 1,657 independent sector beds and 120 beds at Council run facilities. In addition to this, RCCG has worked with a care home to gain temporary CQC registration for 20 nursing care "hot" beds which has increased capacity and went "live" with admissions on 13th April for an initial four-month period. This amounts to a total of 1,797 available beds in 36 care homes in Rotherham. The current vacancy rate across all Older People care home beds is 416, which is a vacancy rate of 25.6%. Prior to Covid-19 this rate was c.14.3%.

Bed availability in two care homes has been reduced during the Covid-19 pandemic due to a voluntary embargo on placements in one care home following a Covid-19 outbreak and the other as a result of a voluntary temporary closure.

The Council is no longer the dominant purchaser with only 48% of care home placements funded by the Council. 22% of beds are now occupied by self-funding residents and 30% are placements from out of borough. The care home demographic is changing, the average age of those entering care has increased from 83 (2015/16) to 85, with the average length of stay decreasing from 3-4 years (2015/16), to 2-3 years

The Rotherham system has a data cell monitoring excess deaths, including in care home settings and providing regular surveillance data through to the Gold Place group. This group has been in operation since commencement of the pandemic period.

Learning Disability and Mental Health

Rotherham as a place (Council and CCG) provides services for approx. 780 people with a learning disability. There are 347 carers aged between 55 and 69 who support a person with a learning disability.

There are 47 learning disability and mental health CQC registered services operating in Rotherham. The Rotherham system directly commissions 285 beds. The Council has a capacity of 22 bed learning disability beds at Parkhill Lodge. In total Rotherham has a 687 bed capacity of residential / nursing care for people under 65 (including mental health and learning disability).

The Council delivers day services and there are 3 independent providers who deliver day opportunities for people with a learning disability who have complex needs. There are 15 micro / community enterprises who offer various day opportunities/ support to people with a learning disability/and or autism. There is a total capacity of 71 independent sector beds for people with mental health needs.

There are to date, a total of 13 bed vacancies in learning disability and mental health services.

Recognising the Council and CCGs commitments to people who we fund residing outside of the borough, Council officers have also undertaken a joint exercise with the Continuing Health Care team to provide assurance that all our out of area placements are being appropriately supported by care providers. This is assisted through the strong regional relationships the Council has with other local authorities through the ADASS network.

Primary and Community Support

All 36 older peoples care homes in Rotherham have benefited from an aligned GP practice for several years; recently this agreement has been extended to cover all care homes including those supporting people with a learning disability or mental health needs. There is also a named Council lead from the Adult Care commissioning team, and access to the Clinical Contract Quality Officer who works in an integrated role with the Council. During Covid-19 there has been frequent contact with the care homes to ensure consistent advice and support is offered. This has included where appropriate visits to support in ensuring PPE and IPC arrangements are being followed correctly based on the individual care homes environment.

Rotherham also has a Care Home Liaison Service provided by the Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT) that have worked closely with system partners to increase resources to care homes who require further advice and support. Our Community physicians also work closely with care homes, alongside our advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) service.

Testing

The Councils commissioning team, in conjunction with the Public Health function, have offered support to care homes to organise testing on a daily basis, including a local offer facilitated by The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT) that has proved essential for frontline care staff who cannot access other testing facilities due to lack of access to a private vehicle etc . As the guidance progressed our local testing cell led by the Director of Public Health has worked to establish a co-ordinated system wide approach which was communicated on the 19th May 2020 to all care homes and included:

- a joint letter from the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, the RCCG Chief Nurse and the Director of Public Health, outlining the roll-out of further measures to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 in care homes, starting with those where maximum benefit can be achieved

- The department of Health and Social Care's Fact Sheet outlining "Whole home testing for care home staff and residents"
- The Rotherham Social Care testing plan which describes the local pathways for testing and the prioritisation process overseen by the Director of Public Health

TRFT are also working to the guidance on admission to care homes and ensuring that appropriate testing is provided prior to any discharge. Our commissioned Covid-19 beds, which are situated in a new care home facility and existing care home, are used where in the first instance returning to a care home is not appropriate.

Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A lead officer has been appointed to work with the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum to ensure PPE is provided where required. A link to the Council's website has been developed which allows providers to regularly complete a web form to inform the Council of their PPE stock situation if stock levels falls below one week's supply. To date the Council has issued 229,462 items to different independent sector organisations.

Collaboration with Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (RCCG) has allowed an understanding of PPE requirements for care homes that may provide more complex aerosol generating procedures. There has also been effective mutual aid regarding sharing of PPE across the Rotherham system, facilitated by the Gold group. The group has taken an inclusive and pragmatic whole system view of health and social care, ensuring that provision of PPE reaches the area's most in urgent need including voluntary and independent sector providers.

Recruitment and Training

The Rotherham Skills Academy has been launched to support providers to meet their immediate recruitment and training needs for adult social care workers with the right skills in response to Covid-19. The Skills Academy offers recruitment and selection and training of staff, working in partnership with Skills for Care. All care homes have been offered this support, with 26 care homes taking up the offer thus far. The Council has run a social media campaign to stimulate the market and used its HR section to carry out clearance and checks on behalf of providers. There is no charge for care home providers to join the Skills Academy and costs incurred by the Council will be met as a one-off to support the adult social care sector during Covid-19, using previous grant monies.

Local co-ordination for the for placing returning clinical staff or volunteers into care homes (where care homes request this support) will be via the Councils' Learning and Development team and RCCG Deputy Chief Nurse. We are awaiting national communication on the distribution of staff to support locally; however, we have taken steps to ensure a local volunteer provision is in place and that retired workers from social care have all been written to with a request to return to work, albeit with limited take up thus far.

As part of our response to support care homes under our local action plan we commenced a training package via video conferencing on the 17th April 2020. The training package is based on Public Health England guidance for PPE, IPC and more recently testing and is now in line with the requirements of the national train the trainer programme. We had locally reached out to all care homes and offered training prior to the national requirements but are continuing to improve on this offer. To date all 84

care homes have been offered the training with 34 accessing. There has been 7 sessions taken place so far with 8 sessions planned prior to 29th May 2020 to ensure full coverage. Our training includes Question & Answer sessions with clinical colleagues including the IPC nurse, community physician, advanced nurse practitioners and incorporates a local video. A competency framework have been developed to support care homes in the assurance process. This has received positive feedback thus far, with several care homes emailing compliments through to the relevant officers. A small number of care homes that identified a lack of appropriate IT equipment during our assurance process, so we are also offering face to face training sessions. Aside from this we are working as a system to identify an appropriate longer term solution, including working with Sheffield University on a pilot using 35 sim enabled google pixel tablets. This also links to the ability for care homes to ensure residents can have contact with family during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the training, through our daily monitoring of care homes, any outbreaks are being identified quickly and early conversations taking place with Public Health and the CCG's IPC nurse. The IPC nurse is proactively contacting homes to support them where outbreaks are occurring and provide advice to support further spread of the disease.

A multi-disciplinary team consisting of IPC nurse, clinical leads, community physician, commissioning and public health have also offered video conferencing to care homes identified as at risk (i.e. due to outbreaks/staffing concerns) to provide support and advice in a reassurance role.

The Council's website pages for Covid-19 aimed at providers are not only a vehicle to access PPE but a single point of access to all information and guidance relating to Covid-19 for all providers across health and social care. This is to ensure consistent communication and a feedback loop has been created via our commissioning inbox where issues can be raised and resolved.

Well Being and Psychological Support

Public Health and RCCG has commissioned a South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw level "Listening Ear" service to include access by all care homes. The service went "live" on 20th April. There is an offer of practical and emotional health and wellbeing support during the Covid-19 crisis for both staff and residents.

The service provides:

- One to one telephone support from a qualified Worker
- Information, emotional and practical support
- Practical support dealing with healthcare agencies
- Local information with regards to the current funeral process
- Help overcoming any feelings of isolation
- Referrals and signposting to other services as required.

The service is free of charge and contact can be made by telephoning a free phone number 0800 048 5224 or helpline@listening-ear.co.uk

The Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust (RDaSH) provides dedicated clinical psychology to improve the mental health of residents in care homes through the Care Home Liaison Team (Mental Health). The team also provide support and guidance to both residents and care home staff in providing strategies and treatments, including occupational therapy. A resource pack has been

developed to send to all care homes. This includes resources on staff well-being, managers guide to understanding well-being in their teams, coping with loss/collective mourning, and how this may be facilitated in care homes, understanding behaviours that challenge in dementia during Covid-19, chaplaincy/spiritual support.

Work is underway to enhance the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) support so that care workers can self-refer for some tailored psychological support for low level stress, anxiety, low mood.

Approach to Alternative Accommodation

A temporary registration was issued to a newly opened care home to provide 20 beds for people that have tested positive for Covid-19 and are not able to return to their usual place of residence i.e. due to risk of transmission. These beds were commissioned jointly by the system on the 13th April 2020 for an initial four month period. RCCG also commissioned a further self-contained unit at another care home for the provision of an additional 8 beds in the same time period. These beds are all providing nursing care, with a full multi-disciplinary team approach from across health and social care including support from occupational therapy, GP and the community physician.

Consideration through our continuity planning has been taken to provide further options of accommodation should this be required such as opening closed beds within the Council's in-house residential care provision. Fortunately to date this additional capacity has not been required.

Finally our frequent contact with providers has included conversations to establish any difficulties in isolating residents, which forms part of our overarching risk management approach. This has enabled us to work, where required with providers to examine solutions. All care homes in the borough were subject to regular contract monitoring from the Council prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and Adult Care officers therefore have a good understanding of building layouts and bed configurations which assists in the practical planning elements.

Financial Support

In conjunction to the support offer detailed above, which is not exhaustive list of our collective efforts across the health and social care system to provide support to the care home market, we have offered an initial financial package. The Council have provided a fixed upfront cash payment of £15,000 to support additional expenditure incurred as a result of Covid-19 over a 12 week period, from 1st April, 2020, which has been agreed through Cabinet and communicated to all care homes for older people. Details of this report and a further report to support care and support providers for people with a learning disability and/or autism are available here:

<http://modgov-p-db/documents/g14983/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-May-2020%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

The Council has increased the frequency of payments to a weekly basis over the 12-week period which supports cash flow and ensure finances are in place to maintain the workforce. The position will be reviewed after the 12-week period, considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The financial support also includes provision of a £100,000 contingency fund for Adult Care to utilise should additional emergency

funding be required in addition to mutual aid (much of which is identified in various elements of this narrative).

The Council is planning to provide more detail on a cost workbook exercise to illustrate the additional extraordinary costs incurred. This is intended to provide further understanding of the viability of the care home sector, in order to inform both the Council and RCGG on the support required in the medium to longer term.

In addition to this, the Government have recently announced the Infection Control Fund to reduce the rate of transmission in and between care homes and support the wider workforce resilience. This will be paid to care homes in line with national guidance based on the number of CQC registered beds which amounts to a total of £2,256,507 (75% of the total grant) for 2,344 registered beds in Rotherham. For Rotherham this will equate to a payment of £962.67 per bed.

From the total grant there is 25%, which equates to £752,000, to be allocated to Domiciliary Care providers who are registered with the Care Quality Commission and are geographically located within the Rotherham boundary. A total of 41 providers fall into this category. Twelve are contracted to the council to deliver approximately 15,300 care and support hours per week. The remainder deliver domiciliary care in supported living settings, support to people who use their personal budget as a direct payment or support to people who choose to purchase their care and support privately. A proposal to apportion the fund to each provider based the hours of care and support delivered to Rotherham residents is currently being consulted on with the market. The fund will be allocated on the condition that it is utilised for workforce measures undertaken to control infection.

Details of the Council's expenditure to support adult social care providers, including care homes respond to Covid-19 and the application of the Infection Control Fund can be found on the Council website here:

<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/adult-social-care/adult-social-care-providers-personal-assistants/9>

The Council is considering any further financial support that maybe required for the wider adult social care sector, including care homes. This would be in addition to the original 12-week funding period referenced in the Council Cabinet reports, as is due to end on 30th June 2020 and payments made under the ring-fenced Adult Social Care Infection Fund grant. Any such decision on funding would be taken by the Council's Cabinet and copies of the report(s), supporting documentation and decisions would be subsequently published on the Council website.

Forward Planning

In conjunction with the continuation of key actions outlined within this letter our system action plan also includes;

- Development of ECHO to enhance the training offer to all care homes
- Consistent primary care approach across all care homes – further alignment via the GP Locally Enhanced Scheme (LES)
- Roll out of the use of Pulse Oximeters

- Support to ensure consistent case management
- Strengthening of pathways for care homes such as falls prevention including support offer from community services
- Further support for End of Life Care and the a local reuse of medication process with ongoing support to care homes via the medication management team.

System Level Confidence

The Rotherham health and care system has a significant level of confidence in the timely reporting mechanisms we have in place to identify risk in individual care homes and the appropriate governance in place to ensure that risk is escalated and dealt with in a collaborative way. We have a contingency plan linked to risk levels in care homes that supports providers individual Business Continuity Planning (the Council's commissioning function requested this information from all providers at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak). We also have a robust action plan which is monitored via the daily Care Homes meeting and is regularly refreshed to reflect emerging issues.

We have a high standard of quality providers in Rotherham which is reflected in CQC ratings across the care homes in the borough. As of 1st March 2020 (the last comparator period) over 76% of Care Homes in Rotherham were rated Good or Outstanding by CQC, with the rest Requires Improvement as the borough has no live Inadequate ratings.

We are proud of the resilience shown across the system in this challenging time and take overall assurance from our positive relationships and communication with care home providers.

The constructive behaviours and relationships have helped to address the challenges faced with the national shortage of PPE equipment and lower than average staffing levels at care homes due to staff shielding, symptomatic and self-isolating, self-isolating due to family members being symptomatic and confirmed with Covid-19. Although locally we have been able to support a small number of providers in mutual aid staffing solutions when requested and are exploring support from NHS Professionals (staffing agency used by health), there remains staffing challenges across health and social care and issues of indemnity in working across providers.

The testing regime can be confusing; locally we are trying support providers to understand the procedure by creating a framework to prioritise according to risk i.e. where there is an outbreak or where staff absence is problematic. All care homes across Rotherham will be included regardless of the source of their funding. The challenge remains that once a care home is tested there may be an impact on the ability to provide safe service due to a high level of asymptomatic staff being unable to work and agency staff not being a robust solution due to risk of cross-infections. If care home staffing levels reach a critical point, then they may not be deemed safe by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in their regulatory role, potentially leading to temporary closure and the need for residents to move to alternative locations.

Rotherham has a higher than average number of care home beds, particularly for older people, with vacancies across the system prior to Covid-19. The Rotherham system strategic direction is in line with national guidance around the promotion of 'Why not Home, Why not Today' and as a system we have worked collaboratively to promote reablement and rehabilitation at home wherever possible leading to a decrease in

discharges to long term care. However, we recognise the requirement for a vibrant care home market and the impact of Covid-19 is causing increasing financial pressure on the market.

As a system we are committed to supporting providers in an integrated way, engagement has taken place via various sources including the Integrated Care Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Board and the care home sector via a range of forum including sharing of local plans, where appropriate, letters informing providers of our local intentions and opportunities for feedback via commissioning inbox and other communication methods. We are also offering opportunities for direct conversations with the Council and RCCG regarding concerns of individual providers.

We will continue to work together to support resilience across the market in these challenging times and welcome the wider system support from NHS England and financial assistance for the sector from Government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Kemp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Sharon Kemp,
Chief Executive**