

30 October 2020

To: [winterplanteam@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:winterplanteam@dhsc.gov.uk)

Dear Minister of State for Care

**RICHMOND ADULT SOCIAL CARE WINTER PLAN 2020-21**

I am writing in reply to the government's Winter Plan for Adult Social Care 2020-2021 published on 18 September 2020 and the requirement for local authorities to confirm they have developed and put in place local winter plans.

I can confirm that the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames has developed its winter plan in response to the anticipated rise in demand for services over the winter months. This plan sits alongside the [Local Outbreak Control Plan](#) for Richmond, which sets out our approach for responding to future local outbreaks of COVID-19 and for keeping residents and our workforce safe by preventing and controlling the spread of infection in all settings.

Winter planning is a necessary and a critical part of service planning in order to ensure business continuity and managing risks during what is typically, a pressured time of the year. Following the additional challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, effective planning is now more important than ever. We have worked with local NHS partners to contribute to the development of their own winter plans both at system and Trust level. This included collectively considering lessons learned from last winter and the first wave of the pandemic to ensure plans for this winter are both effective and sustainable.

The Department of Adult Social Care and Public Health has established a Transforming the Future Programme to oversee a phased approach to restoring services, which were paused to deal with the COVID-19 emergency response, and, to continue work on service transformation put on hold at the beginning of the pandemic. The programme seeks to embed the learning from COVID-19 first wave and adopt lasting improvements to the way vulnerable residents are supported through changed approaches to service delivery.

As we head into the winter, we will build on the tireless efforts and resilience of the adult social care workforce since March 2020 to implement our winter plan, the objectives of which are to:

- Ensure the continuity and successful response of adult social care services during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and enable effective contingencies to be implemented in a planned and managed basis.

- Provide a strategic approach to demand and capacity management to meet high levels of demand.
- Ensure that adult social care teams have sufficient staff and access to care capacity to continue to support people to live independently in their own homes wherever possible in line with Care Act 2014 principles.
- Ensure a home first approach is followed from hospital wherever possible building on learning from Discharge to Assess services set up in March 2020.
- Ensure continued collaboration and integrated working with the NHS, adult social care providers, the voluntary and community sector.
- Harness digital technology to provide innovative solutions for supporting residents and care providers.
- Manage winter and COVID-19 pressures within agreed budgets making best use of government COVID-19 grants.
- Monitor the impact of winter and COVID-19 on local people and the social care workforce.

### **General provider capacity and oversight**

Throughout the pandemic, we have worked even closer with care providers to secure sufficient capacity to meet the care and support needs of vulnerable residents and supporting effective system flow between health and care services. Robust contingency plans are in place to ensure sufficient numbers of providers are in place to meet demand and that there are sufficient numbers of highly skilled and competent staff to ensure high quality care during this winter. This includes spot providers that can be commissioned during periods of higher demand. Provider capacity continues to be actively managed through weekly calls with providers and multi-disciplinary meetings.

The Council is acutely aware of the significant challenges some care home and home care providers have faced in procuring PPE during the first wave of the pandemic. In response, the Council provided free PPE throughout and before the portal was operating; and distributed additional emergency PPE to providers where stocks were depleted, and normal supply routes had run out. The Council continues to maintain regular contact with all care providers operating in the borough to retain oversight of any issues with PPE.

Prior to the pandemic, we reviewed provider contingency planning arrangements and have kept them under active review throughout this period. A multi-agency Care Home Oversight Group with representatives from Adult Social Care, CCG, GPs and Public Health has met every 2 weeks to maintain oversight of the local market and target support where appropriate and continues to do so. The Market Self-Assessment Questionnaire was completed and submitted in October 2020.

Specific actions we have taken include:

- A dedicated Care Home Coordinator post working across health and care until April 2021.
- Provided above inflation fee uplifts of 3% across the board.
- Provided £2m additional financial provider support including Infection Control Fund since April.
- Provided free PPE throughout and before the portal was operating (at Council cost outside of financial provider relief).
- Distributed additional emergency PPE to providers where stocks depleted, and normal supply routes had run out/unstocked.
- Commissioned additional reablement and home care.
- Paid services on commissioned hours to protect service viability.
- Block purchased additional care home beds at the height of the crisis.
- Developed [dedicated provider pages](#) on the Council website bringing together national and local guidance and financial support available for care providers during the pandemic. Includes extensive FAQs from providers and continues to be updated in response to national and local developments.
- Contacted providers at various points with offers of support and put in place dedicated contact points in the NHS and Council.
- Developed guidance on care home visiting and on dementia in response to the Alzheimer's campaign.
- Developed an online directory which includes references to Mental Health and wellbeing support for care home staff via the NHS.
- Provided free PPE to direct payment support providers for distribution to service users with a personal assistant.
- Worked with CCG to provide digital and IT support to enable remote and virtual contact.
- Daily monitoring of Capacity Tracker and Market Insight Tool including circulation of key information to lead officers and Council members.
- Weekly webinars for care homes explaining guidance and best clinical practice via the South West London Infection Prevention and Control Team.
- Via the NHS, IPC tailored support was provided by the IPC team plus access to a dedicated mailbox for queries: [infectioncontrol@swlondon.nhs.uk](mailto:infectioncontrol@swlondon.nhs.uk).

## **Social Work assessment capacity during winter**

During the first wave of COVID-19, the Council successfully maintained services at stage two of the Care Act Easements using current flexibilities within the Care Act 2014. Local procedures are well documented and understood by staff enabling swift application of easements if required during this winter.

A dedicated team was created in March 2020 to support rapid recruitment and virtual induction of additional social workers and occupational therapists to meet anticipated increase in demand. Additional staff recruited during this period have been retained to support the recovery of work that was paused from the first wave and to ensure sufficient social work capacity during the winter.

In response to COVID-19 and to alleviate pressure on social work staff, recording tools for carrying out assessments and reviews were streamlined at pace and to include COVID-19 risk assessments. These new recording tools enable staff to carry out effective on line assessments and to use their time more efficiently and will help free up valuable social work capacity during winter.

We work in partnership with South West London Clinical Commissioning Group and Hounslow and Richmond Community Healthcare to meet Hospital Discharge Service requirements. We were in a good position to meet these requirements and built on established arrangements with the integrated Richmond Response and Rehabilitation Team and the joint assessment team with Kingston Hospital and Kingston Council.

In March a Community Hub was established with a dedicated helpline to coordinate the support offered by the Council working in partnership with the local voluntary sector. The hub was disbanded in July when shielding was paused but contingency plans are in place to respond to future local outbreaks including restarting the community hub model to support those most at risk of COVID-19. Data on clinically extremely vulnerable residents has been maintained since the pausing of shielding in July.

Taking learning from the Community Hub, the Council has developed a “front door” pilot to embed prevention and early intervention and manage demand. The service will focus on making every contact count and increasing responsiveness to residents in a similar way to the successful Community Hub model and will further increase joint working with voluntary sector, social prescribing and health.

## **Voluntary sector support**

In response to COVID-19, many voluntary organisations have had to develop new ways of working to meet the high demand for practical support very early on. This included help with food and collecting prescriptions as well as emotional support. At the start of the lockdown, Richmond was the first borough to organise an

emergency food supply building on the structure of the Community Independent Living Service (CILS) partnership to ensure a co-ordinated response.

Daily conference calls with the voluntary sector were facilitated to coordinate the initial response during the first wave of the pandemic. Regular calls to the sector continue to ensure ongoing capacity. Building on processes established during the first wave, local voluntary organisations are working together to continue to provide free food parcels to vulnerable people and their carers

### **Supporting Unpaid Carers**

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the number of people who have found themselves supporting vulnerable family and friends and placed immense physical and mental pressure on unpaid carers. It is more important than ever to ensure carers are recognised and valued and are able to access support when they need it. Actions to enhance our support to carers include:

- Streamlined carers assessment and support planning tools, enabling carer assessments on line and promoting carer self-assessment.
- Reviewing and updating public information and launching a communications plan to raise awareness of local support.
- Supporting carers to stay healthy and well through promoting the flu jab.
- Continuing to work in close partnership with carers services commissioned from the voluntary sector to increase the number of carers accessing support including those who are digitally excluded.
- Working with NHS partners to ensure it is easy for carers to interact with health and care services.
- Providing alternatives to day care including working with Richmond Carers Hub to provide emergency respite offer during winter 2020-21.
- Giving access to free social care online training for carers.
- Raising awareness about carers through a Health and Wellbeing Board Seminar in November 2020.
- Making Every Contact Count module on recognising unpaid carers.

### **Digital technology**

Digital technology provides us with a significant opportunity to support people in a safe and virtual way during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as supporting and enhancing caring networks and releasing capacity in the care provider market during this difficult time.

One of the emerging priorities of the department's Transforming the Future Programme is making full use of technological innovation to further enhance

service delivery and promote independence, bringing innovation and providing a springboard for service transformation. Specific actions include:

- Adopting a Digital First approach to ensure digital technology is embedded as a core part of the way we deliver services.
- Supporting providers to increase their use of technology to change the way services are delivered, improve efficiencies and increase resilience.
- Working with voluntary sector partners to improve digital inclusion, including supporting the development of a community-led strategy for increasing digital access.
- Deploying 100 video care phones during winter 2020-21 to support vulnerable residents to stay connected with family, friends and local community services to prevent social isolation during the pandemic.
- Continuing to support staff to work effectively at home and remotely with digital solutions using technology at work that we do in our 'day to day' life.
- Working with NHS partners to share learning and encourage more joint working and ensure services are better connected.
- Supporting South West London Clinical Commissioning Group to support eligible care homes to apply for a tablet device as part of the NHSX offer and providing digital and IT support to enable remote and virtual contact with clinicians, families and friends.

We are confident that actions taken in the early stages of the pandemic, our ability to build on our existing collaborations and the tireless efforts and resilience of the adult social care workforce since March 2020, will ensure an effective response and delivery of our winter plan.

Yours sincerely,



Liz Bruce (Mrs)

Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

## Appendix Winter Plan Checklist



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