

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 November 2020

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Care Settings and Outbreak Management

Over recent months, members have been informally briefed on a regular basis of how the directorate has responded to the challenges of the pandemic. We have now formally reviewed the situation on Care Settings and outbreak management, and been made aware of the learning from Wave 1.

We now find ourselves in another period of tighter national Covid restrictions - Wave 2. Some of my report inevitably reflects the September time position, but nearly all of the content and context of our discussion at the time, reported in detail here, holds true for the present.

Care settings, whether they are nursing homes, residential homes or extra care, have been at the heart of our response. We have 235 of these settings in NY – more than any other area of Yorkshire, with high concentrations in Harrogate and Scarborough. This reflects the high number of people coming to retire in the County, as well as people being referred from West Yorkshire and Teesside.

As lockdown was easing - which it was when we met as a committee - we had been dealing with a wider range of small outbreaks, particularly in workplace settings. In reality, around 30% of our care settings had had outbreaks; but some have had more than one outbreak. Overall, our situation has been around the England average and about middle of the pack in terms of comparator authorities.

Like many areas of the country, we think that the position in extra care has been better than in traditional residential and nursing homes. Whilst the percentage in residential is the same as extra care, it is actually a bigger bed base.

From the start of the pandemic, we stepped up our existing support to providers. From 6th May, during the then peak period for the pandemic, it was so reassuring for members to hear that during this crucial period calls were being made every day to all providers and we have had a redeployed team of 80 people in contact and liaison officer roles.

The directorate clearly worked collaboratively with Public Health England, Environmental Health Officers and NHS colleagues with contact tracing skills, and are looking at how we can build on our learning from care settings and community support hubs, to create a team of people who can actively manage multiple outbreaks and do the street-level outbreak management.

Learning to date has been that:

- Good multi-agency work is crucial, whether that is in a care home or a factory.
- Having a flying squad – for example our Quality Improvement Team working with care providers has been essential.

- Risk stratification and constantly checking the numbers and trends has helped enormously.
- Developing our own approach to testing – and asking Government for more local control – has helped.
- Webinars and e-bulletins have helped massively with training and awareness raising.
- There is a need for even safer discharge pathway from hospital to care homes.
- 7/7 infection control services required.
- Testing programmes go hand in hand with outbreak management – North Yorkshire has been pro-active but national systems are still too complicated and subject to delays.
- How to ensure that good PPE distribution systems are provided.
- Be aware of emerging risk factors: low paid factory jobs; some sectors rely heavily on migrant labour.
- Living with Covid” – this could be until May 2021 and it is expected that there will be future viruses.

Looking ahead, I am sure members will want the committee to retain a focussed interest on:

- Residential and domestic care market responsibilities, including regulation, development and shaping - how we can prepare for any future pandemic.
- The implications for how the service continues to supports vulnerable adults to live independently.
- In collaboration with Scrutiny of Health Committee, the integration of health and social care – the impetus that the pandemic has given to this.

In summary, the committee was pleased at the comprehensive and professional nature of the support offered. It is right that we retain a scrutiny interest in all these areas, but as we move again into a period of tighter restrictions, we will be mindful of the pressures on the service.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR KARIN SEDGWICK

4 November 2020