



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jeane Freeman MSP

Cabinet Secretary Health and
Sport

Via email only

Health and Sport Committee
T3.40

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 348 5410

Calls via RNID Typetalk: 18001 0131 348 5224

Email: healthandsport@parliament.scot

10 June 2020

Dear Jeane

Health and Sport Committee consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on care homes

Thank you for giving evidence to the Committee on 4 June in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on care homes.

This letter seeks further information to that discussed on the day, including questions Members were unable to ask due to time constraints. For ease and context, where relevant, I refer to specific passages from the Official Report of 4 June below.

Individual care homes

In your opening statement (col. 3) you highlighted that “38 per cent of adult care homes have lodged no notification of suspected Covid-19 incidents with the Care Inspectorate since the start of the epidemic.”

- Can you provide further information on whether there is any correlation between prevalence of COVID-19 cases and location of these care homes?
- What work is the Scottish Government planning to review these care homes and to share good practice identified to ensure learning is taken forward?
- Can you provide further information on any correlation between prevalence of Covid-19 cases and the grading of a care home by the Care Inspectorate on its most recent inspection?
- Have care homes graded as poor or unsatisfactory had the highest incidence of Covid-19?

Guidance

Throughout the meeting, you spoke about the guidance issued to care homes, acknowledging there was guidance from Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland (HPS), and from Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) in some areas. Comments we received highlighted this guidance was difficult to navigate and raised questions around whether guidance for care homes was received too late.

- Can you provide more information on which HSCPs issued separate guidance from the Scottish Government and HPS guidance? And whether HSCP guidance contained any variations?
- How will the learning from this be taken forward in the event of a second spike, or a future pandemic? Will this involve changes to coordination arrangements between Scottish Government, HPS, and HSCPs?

Further, you noted in col. 5 that the current easing of lockdown measures for the general population does not have a direct impact on the guidance that is offered to care homes. However, many people are concerned about loved ones living in care homes and are eager to visit when able to do so. Easing of restrictions elsewhere could lead to pressure and uncertainty in care homes.

- Can you clarify whether the Scottish Government will be providing specific guidance for care homes to help them manage uncertainties and management of visitors under each phase in the route map for moving out of lockdown?
- Can you outline in which phase of lockdown, people will be able to visit their relatives in care homes?

Health and Social Care Partnerships

The Committee is aware of variations between HSCPs, how they are engaging and how forward planning is undertaken to prepare for future situations.

- Can you outline what steps, if any, the Scottish Government is taking to benchmark HSCPs to monitor preparations for future surge planning? An indication on timescales for monitoring and review would be helpful.

Clinical Assessment

In col. 4 you spoke about clinical assessment in relation to patients being discharged from hospitals to care homes. You noted these assessments, undertaken by each location, should include details of overall health condition and medication needs. However, guidance on testing admissions to care homes for COVID-19 was only announced on 21 April 2020.

- Prior to 21 April 2020, when testing was not available, how was COVID-19 included in clinical assessments when transferring patients to care homes?

Infection prevention and control

In col. 3 you mention that “prior to the pandemic, all care homes would have been expected to abide by the “National Infection Prevention and Control Manual”, and the

Care Inspectorate would have inspected care homes against that manual". In col. 25 you were reluctant to make any assumptions on whether failings in the quality of infection prevention and control in some care homes led to cases of Covid-19. You further mentioned that these were areas that would need to be reviewed.

- Can you provide detail of the next steps for the Scottish Government in reviewing COVID-19 management in care homes and when you expect these reviews to be undertaken?
- In anticipation of any future outbreak, can you advise on any steps planned to ensure that future guidance will contain more advice on precautionary measures, and any focus on quality infection prevention and control?

Care Inspectorate

In col. 11 and col. 21, you spoke of the powers of the Care Inspectorate (CI) and the possibility the Care Inspectorate could have more powers in the future.

- Could you elaborate on how the Scottish Government plans to review this going forward, along with timescales for review? It would be helpful to detail if this consideration will include preventative risk assessment, resource implications and powers to make decisions on registration of care homes.

In col. 20 you reported from memory that the CI has undertaken 27 on-site inspections in 19 locations. You further mentioned that you would provide more information if those figures were incorrect.

- Can you clarify how many on-site inspections have taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic and the date range applied to these numbers?
- Did the CI stop inspecting during that time and what risk assessments were in place during those inspections for both CI staff, and care home staff and residents?

Review of social care in Scotland

In col. 25 you spoke about the review of adult social care in Scotland and how learning from the pandemic would be used to inform considerations around the sustainability of the sector and the wider provision of social care in Scotland.

- What further work do you think is needed to address areas highlighted by the pandemic in relation to social care?
- Can you give an indication of timescales when work will resume and any targets for completion of the reform of social care in Scotland? And whether you anticipate the Scottish Government will be undertaking wider consultation to inform that work?

Anticipatory Care Planning

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we were unable to raise the issue of anticipatory care planning during the meeting. Could you provide clarification on the following:

- Why was guidance about anticipatory care planning updated for COVID-19?
- Were care home staff expected to complete anticipatory care plans in Scotland during the pandemic?
- How were these conversations with residents conducted when primary care staff were not visiting care homes?

Given our ongoing scrutiny of this subject I would be grateful for a response by 23 June.

Yours sincerely



Lewis Macdonald
Convener, Health and Sport Committee