

Chief Executive
7th Floor, Zone D
Bernard Weatherill House
Mint Walk
Croydon CR0 1EA

To MHCLG:
careandreform2@communities.gov.uk

Tel/Typetalk: 020 8760 5757
Email: jo.negrini@croydon.gov.uk
Website: www.croydon.gov.uk

Please ask for/reply to Jo Negrini

29 May 2020

Dear Helen Whately MP,

RE: CROYDON CARE HOME SUPPORT PLAN

As requested in your letter dated 14 May, please find below an overview of the system-wide support put in place for care homes in the London Borough of Croydon.

The Croydon health and care system is brought together by the One Croydon Alliance, a partnership of six organisations, underpinned by a 10-year alliance agreement and overseen by a Health and Care Board. The partners are Croydon Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Croydon Health Services NHS Trust, South London and the Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM), Age UK Croydon and Croydon GP Collaborative. There are strong relationships in place in Croydon across the health and care system and the borough is on a journey to integrate and transform health and care services. This has given us a strong foundation to respond quickly and has underpinned our system-wide approach to supporting care homes before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Croydon has the largest adult social care provider market in London with 126 care homes, 63 of which support older residents, the scale of the challenge locally has been significant. Support for local care homes was identified as a priority at the outset of the pandemic and, building on existing system-wide working, we took early action to ensure significant support arrangements were put in place. This has been supplemented by prompt action taken where additional responsibilities have been set out by Government.

We are very proud of how positively care homes in the borough have responded and the continued commitment and care shown by carers who are working on the front line supporting vulnerable residents across the borough. Whilst it is positive that many care homes have told us that they have felt supported by us, the scale of difficulties our care homes continue to face cannot be underestimated, particularly the emotional impact on families and care home staff where residents have lost their lives. We recognise how challenging this has been for professionals, residents, relatives, and their wider circle of support and we would like to thank everyone for their efforts and support during this difficult time.

We are continually working across organisational boundaries and in a joined-up way to plan, respond and improve our ways of working to support our homes. Our commitment to provide local leadership to support the sector during this challenging time remains a priority.

1. OUR SYSTEM CONFIDENCE

As part of our preparations for this submission, we have consulted with our care homes, clinical leaders and the Croydon Health & Care Executive. We are therefore confident that the measures set out in the Government's Adult Social Care Action Plan, the letters from NHS England and NHS Improvement of 29 April and 1 May and your letter of 14 May 2020 are substantively in place, and our support in many areas exceed the national requirements.

The support for care homes has been overseen on a daily basis by the council's Chief Executive through the council's Gold Group, which has been supplemented by strong system oversight. Building on the Care Home Transformation Programme that we started last year, a system-wide COVID-19 Care Home Response Group meets weekly with key representatives from across the system. The group has overseen the development and implementation of our Care Home Support Plan, which has ensured strong oversight of our approach and that the appropriate action has been taken in a coordinated way. Senior leaders from Croydon's care homes have recently been invited to join the group to ensure sector representation in the group.

We are confident that measures are in place because:

- **Care homes feel supported** – In a survey on 11 and 12 May, 89% of care homes felt supported or very supported by the council and partners.
- **Infection rates** – Daily analysis of symptomatic residents in care homes shows reducing numbers following the peak in mid-April. The number of suspected COVID-19 related deaths in care homes has slowed considerably with no deaths reported in the last week.
- **Staff are returning to work** – Currently 18% of carers and 15% of nurses are not at work. This is half the proportion that were not working at the peak of the pandemic.
- **Training** – Over 97% of care homes have accessed additional infection control training.
- **Good infection control practice** – Our multi-disciplinary Care Home Support Team (CHST) conducted detailed analysis of 30 care homes and found consistent good practice across the homes with an enhanced infection control approach being implemented.

There has been strong political oversight of this work both prior to and during the pandemic, including being a focus of Croydon's Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub-Committee over the last year. In addition, the Chair of our Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) has been kept updated on our care home system response work and our SAB has continued to meet virtually during this time. As part of their role in supporting care homes, the Executive Director of Health, Wellbeing and Adults (DASS) has also assured that the core duties - basic safety, human rights and safeguarding - are still being delivered and that the support provided is underpinning this. The council's safeguarding processes are still fully functioning.

We have also established a health and care COVID-19 coordination group, which brings together agencies across health and care, including clinical leaders and the voluntary and community sector. The response to care homes has reported into this group frequently to ensure a coordinated approach to our COVID-19 response.

While we are confident that many actions discussed above are being implemented, this does not diminish the challenge faced by care homes and we will continue to enhance our support offer for homes as required.

2. REGIONAL RESPONSE

COVID-19 has provided an unprecedented challenge to adult social care. The challenge has been significant in London due to the early and rapid spread of the virus, local patterns of deprivation, high levels of air pollution and the high proportion of ethnic minority populations in most London boroughs.

Across the capital, London local authorities responded to the challenge and our responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act by working together as London ADASS and Chief Executives, alongside NHS partners to identify issues, galvanise responses and lead several pan-London initiatives. We brought our coordinated response together through the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) and joint governance with NHS London.

Using data and evidence we developed a comprehensive understanding of the London adult social care markets (home care and care homes) during the spread of COVID-19. Our commissioners used this as a key part of their daily interaction to support providers. It has underpinned and strengthened relationships with providers locally and provided information on care homes across borough boundaries, which has streamlined the work and reduced the burden on providers. Since mid-March this has supported local operational responses: prioritising active delivery of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring appropriate staffing levels and providing Public Health infection control advice and support.

Being alert to emerging issues which led to care home challenges and our early response (we started reporting care home deaths and COVID-19 cases from 23 March) allowed action to be taken to respond in London and provided early warning nationally via the SCG of issues that would develop across the country.

A summary of the work across London and issues for the future are captured in the attached London Region Appendix 1. The Director of Adults Social Care and Director of Public Health from Croydon are members of the London-wide care homes group helping to shape the regional work underway.

3. CROYDON CARE HOME SUPPORT PLAN

In Croydon we have always worked in partnership with care homes and have a range of mechanisms to support our homes to ensure the safety and quality of care for our residents. This includes collecting data from care homes, a joint intelligence group which has oversight of our care homes, regular communication and engagement, effective contract management and robust quality assurance arrangements. This work has been enhanced and adapted during the COVID-19 response.

This section of the letter sets out the system response to care homes in Croydon to date and plans for the future, ensuring there is continued support through this pandemic and beyond.

Oversight & Daily Data Analysis

The care home response is overseen by a daily system-wide operational meeting, adapted from a monthly joint intelligence group held pre-COVID. The daily oversight meetings oversee and review the daily data submitted by care homes and wider intelligence. This reports into the Council's Gold group each day, chaired by the council's Chief Executive.

This shared view and local visibility of the sector, has informed the support package offered to care homes, and ensured strong senior oversight of this work. Intelligence is shared with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), who also have regular contact with care homes. This ensures that tailored support and targeted interventions are put in place where needed, and that appropriate actions are agreed and implemented, including taking urgent and immediate action.

Across London, the ADASS Market Insight Tool (MIT), in place for the last year, is providing real-time data overseen by the daily care homes meeting. All 63 older people care homes are using this tool regularly. This allows us to analyse prevalence of COVID-19 amongst residents, occupancy levels, workforce capacity, PPE stock and testing. This information combined with wider intelligence from our local authority commissioners, the Care Home Support Team (CHST) and Public Health team allows us to plan our daily support for homes. We have RAG rated homes, with three homes currently flagged as red and needing intensive support. This support includes bespoke support from the CHST, Public Health consultant and enhanced GP input.

Safeguarding

The council's safeguarding processes are still fully functioning and, where necessary, we make visits to homes to ensure resident safety if care homes are not adhering to guidance. These visits take place in accordance with the appropriate guidance in relation to COVID-19. In the absence of regular visits, ongoing contact with homes is taking place through video links and discussions with relatives of residents. Daily operational care home meetings also consider COVID-19 data and other local intelligence to ensure that quality of care and safety of residents is at the forefront. In addition, the council's deprivation of liberty (DoLS) lead within the CHST, provides advice to care homes on DoLS compliance. COVID-19 and the lockdown has presented some new challenges which the team have responded to, especially in respect to people lacking capacity who wish to make unwise decisions.

Communication & engagement

Our communication strategy is crucial to understanding and responding to issues to support our homes. An overview is included below:

- **Weekly information sessions** – We hold weekly online forums which have been in place for the last 10 weeks for care home managers and clinical leads. This includes Public Health providing advice on infection control and PPE, sharing latest information and guidance for the sector and discussing support needs.
- **Check-in calls** – We have regular support calls from the council and CCG to homes to check-in and explore additional support required.
- **Email queries** – A dedicated inbox responds to queries within 24 hours for the adult social care market.
- **Weekly newsletter** – This email for care homes includes advice and guidance for care home staff. 88% of care homes found the information update weekly emails from the council and CCG useful. The remaining 12% wanted their email address added to the circulation list.
- **Care homes website** – Advice and guidance has been collated on a [Croydon website for care homes](#), our single repository for all useful COVID-19 information.

Infection Prevention & Control

This has been a key area of the support plan for care homes. It has included pro-active work to improve the infection control practice across the sector and based on data and intelligence on infection rates, providing targeted support for care homes as required.

We have co-ordinated the dissemination of regional and national guidance through the weekly information sessions which started in March. This has been supplemented by encouraging participation in learning events led by Public Health England and South West London which have been well received. Croydon's Public Health team has also played a role regionally, having led a multi-agency regional group to design a webinar for care homes about COVID-19. This was recognised as best practice nationally and has been delivered multiple times with attendance from hundreds of care homes across London.

The next phase of our approach is delivering infection prevention and control (IPC) training led by the chief nurse. This will include an offer for senior staff in care homes a training webinar by the end of May and then roll out of face-to-face training to all staff in care homes in June. To date, 75 care homes have booked onto the training. This training led by IPC specialists will cover appropriate use of PPE, hand hygiene and swabbing training, to support the testing of residents and staff.

The daily operational group oversees infection rates and coordinates support for individual homes. Any homes with new infections are called by a Public Health consultant to provide tailored IPC advice which care homes have found very useful. These detailed conversations include advice on staff movement, cleaning, visitors, PPE, 'cohorting' and support around testing. We have also delivered bespoke IPC training for groups of care homes in Croydon attended by care home managers and clinical leads.

PPE & Equipment

In the early weeks of the pandemic, ensuring all our homes had sufficient quantities of PPE was a major focus. Given the challenges experienced by providers to source stock, the council stepped into support. We accessed stock through SWL Mutual Aid and through the Local Resilience Forum in order to provide emergency supplies when needed. We monitor stock levels in each home on a daily basis through the MIT and pro-actively make contact with homes to provide emergency stock when needed, which is available seven days a week. To date, the council has supported 62 care homes to date with emergency supplies (a total of 166 emergency requests fulfilled and 110,000 items of PPE provided). Along with other London boroughs we are now a member of the London consortium arrangements co-ordinated by the West London Alliance. The council has coordinated a large order on behalf of over 100 providers, including 32 care homes for PPE. This is initially for six weeks' stock and we will engage with the sector on the future support needed.

To support the use of medical equipment needed for COVID-19 residents in care homes, we have installed telehealth kits and provided training in 22 priority care homes with 18 further installations to follow in the next month. In Croydon we also have a small number of care homes with residents with very high needs and who require aerosol generating procedures (AGP). Providers have been supported with accessing the FFP3 masks and fit testing. Further medical equipment has been sourced at south-west London level and will be delivered to care homes in tranches over the next few weeks.

Clinical Support

In 2019 working collaboratively with other One Croydon Alliance partners, we commenced delivery of a Care Home Support Transformation programme. A GP lead was appointed to ensure sound clinical leadership to drive forward the transformation programme. We introduced a 24/7 telemedicine service in 75 of our care homes and a new locally-commissioned service from general practice to support care homes with regular ward rounds and structured medication reviews.

Building on the work carried out in the last year to improve clinical support to care homes, during the COVID-19 pandemic we have introduced the following additional support:

a) Enhanced Clinical Offer

We have assigned each care home to a named clinical lead. This role will be useful as a point of contact for the home for overall clinical oversight and advice, signposting and helping make the right connections with other support services. General Practice and community services have established weekly check-ins with care homes as part of an enhanced clinical offer. A virtual weekly care home multi-disciplinary team has also been established to support management of residents identified as having complex needs.

This enhanced offer complements the use of our dedicated telemedicine service, which has seen an 80% increase in utilisation during the COVID-19 peak. This remote support has contributed to reductions in ambulance call-outs and helped with verification of death. The service can also help guide care home staff with taking swabs via remote video or support with the use of medical equipment.

b) Additional Community Support

We have integrated a GP within the rapid response team to provide support in assessing and managing acutely unwell residents with the aim to see them within two hours of referral. The team also have ability to conduct video consultations with the care homes if appropriate. Our pharmacy support to care homes has also been strengthened. We now have a complex care pharmacist within the Care Home multidisciplinary meeting (MDT). We also have a named community pharmacists per care home to provide general medication provision and support. A dedicated Learning Disability pharmacist currently supports medication reviews of LD residents. Pharmacy disciplines across the borough are working together and with the wider MDT to ensure care home residents receive appropriate access to medicines supply, advice and review.

We are also working in partnership with General Practice and local hospice services to ensure every resident in care homes have a care plan and treatment escalation plan documented on Coordinate my Care (CMC). St Christopher's Hospice has delivered virtual training modules to care homes on Covid-19 and end of life care. They also have a dedicated phone line to support care home staff managing patients who are approaching the end of their life.

c) Access to NHSmail

98% of care homes in Croydon have now got access to NHSmail, an important tool to improve communication and secure information sharing between health and care professionals and care homes. Access to NHSmail also allows care homes to use MS Teams and its video calls facility.

Testing & Tracing

We have continued to ensure that care homes have been informed promptly about the various testing routes and associated guidance, however testing is coordinated at a central Government level and not by the local Croydon system. Care homes have consistently expressed concern about the number of COVID-19 tests available and the suitability and pace of the different testing options available. We have continued to clarify that the route for the testing of residents following an outbreak (now defined as one person) is the via PHE's London Coronavirus Response Cell. To supplement the sub-regional and national testing, back in April, Croydon implemented an additional system of testing with Croydon University Hospital for priority key workers who were presenting with symptoms including care home staff.

When the national rollout of testing of asymptomatic residents and staff in care homes was announced, we moved quickly to communicate this out to the care homes. We are encouraging all care homes to make use of this opportunity and the Director of Public Health is prioritising homes for testing and will continue to do this on a weekly basis as necessary.

SWL CCG recognise the importance of testing of both staff and residents in care homes to prevent and manage the spread of COVID-19 in those settings. They have confirmed they will support councils to secure testing through the established national routes. If, in exceptional circumstances and on a risk-assessed basis, the need for a care home to access an alternative route for testing is identified, they will explore with the councils the options for mutual aid.

The practice for testing patients leaving hospital before being discharged to a care home has operated in Croydon as per the national guidance. Since the guidance was revised on 23 April, all patients have been tested before being discharged with results shared with the care homes.

Contact tracing is a key element of controlling the spread of COVID-19. Test, track and isolate is concerned with testing individuals to identify whether or not they are positive, tracking down those they have been in contact with and requesting those contacts to self-isolate. Councils have a key role in contact tracing and this function is to be coordinated by the Director of Public Health. Croydon has started to shape its outbreak plan for how it will deploy resources. One of the key elements is contact tracing within care homes.

4. APPROACH TO ADDRESSING SHORT-TERM FINANCIAL PRESSURES EXPERIENCED BY CARE PROVIDERS

Croydon Council has supported the social care provider market as much as possible within the confines of the financial challenges of local government and the adult social care provider market nationally. The section details the direct support available before and during COVID-19 and indirect support for our care homes. In total, at least an additional £4.25m funding will be provided to care homes this year as outlined below.

Pre-COVID-19

Prior to the start of the financial year Croydon Council undertook its annual fee review process for all care home placements. This has resulted in a 1% uplift on care fees for ASC providers for this financial year, at a cost of £2m for all providers including £510,000 for care homes. As a council we understood this did not meet all additional costs for care homes, however, this was working within the challenging national financial context for adult social care.

COVID-19 direct support

Early on we recognised that providers may need additional support during the main period of the pandemic. During this period we have passed £730,000 direct to over 210 care homes, both inside (92 homes) and outside the borough (122 homes), to help with COVID-19 costs in looking after Croydon residents. This provider sustainability payment was equivalent to a two-month uplift of 14% for nursing homes, 10% for residential care homes (older people) and 6% for other residential care homes. To support the new seven-day working hospital discharge, we also provided care homes £200 per referral at weekends or after 5pm on a weekday. In addition, from April the council paid care home providers four weeks in advance to help with cash flow.

We will also be paying a further £4.1m to care providers in two tranches from the Infection Control Fund, with first payment issued next week (week beginning 1 June) to 126 care homes. As per the guidance, a minimum of £3m will be allocated to Croydon's care homes. We are continuing to review providers' financial sustainability using data from the MIT and other sources and will be providing further support as required.

In line with national guidance, the CCG has uplifted the Funded Nursing Care (FNC) rate for 2020/21 backdated to 1 April 2020. The CCG is currently reviewing payments made for 2019/20 in order to make backdated payments to reflect the increase in the 2019/20 rate announced on 30 April 2020.

Where some care services (e.g. day care services) have been temporarily closed during the pandemic, support has been provided where appropriate to ensure the organisations' sustainability. In addition, funding support has also been provided to the voluntary sector towards their support to shielded and vulnerable residents.

Indirect support

The council's commissioning and placements and brokerage team have moved to seven-day working to support care homes. Providers have also been able to access emergency PPE stock free of charge and we have secured via the Pan London PPE Procurement competitive pricing for PPE and this will be made available to the local care market at cost price.

5. PROVISION OF ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION WHERE REQUIRED

We review the capacity of the market on a daily basis and given we have the largest care home market in London, we have had sufficient capacity through the Covid-19 pandemic including the peak in mid-April. Currently Croydon's older people care homes have over 100 residential care home and 150 nursing home beds available.

To date care homes have been able to quarantine and self-isolate residents in parts of the home and establish isolation units. We have increased the number of intermediate care beds to support people's rehabilitation out of hospital. We opened Shirley Oaks to provide additional intermediate care capacity, but this is no longer required as there is sufficient capacity across the care home market.

We have, however, developed a number of contingency accommodation options to support people who need to self-isolate or be shielded to be safely discharged from hospital if required. For those with lower level care needs or housing issues, we block-booked rooms at a local hotel up to 14 June. For those with higher care needs, arrangements were made in March to make block bed bookings, in six care homes in Croydon if required. If there is a

surge in demand, one residential and nursing home facility (empty care home) can be mobilised at short notice where residential and nursing beds where sufficient are no longer available in the market.

6. LOCAL CO-ORDINATION FOR PLACING RETURNING CLINICAL STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS INTO CARE HOMES

The dedication and commitment of our care home workforce throughout this period has been exceptional. The capacity of the workforce has been reviewed on a daily basis and we have been regularly engaging with care homes about workforce issues both in terms of the available workforce and the wellbeing of carers during this difficult period.

Workforce numbers

Data and feedback from care homes shows that confidence of care home staff is returning and the capacity of the workforce is much-improved. Care home's business continuity plans have responded to workforce issues to fill gaps in staffing. Care homes have reported accessing additional staff from bank rather than agency to reduce the risk of transmission passed from home to home. When we surveyed all care homes on 11/12 May, only 6% were facing staff shortages that were causing concern, but all felt they could access additional staff without assistance from the Council and health partners.

We recognise that the impact of track and trace could significantly reduce the number of staff able to work in care homes. We have scenario tested this, bringing in additional management, clinical support and carers to help homes at very short notice via emergency planning procedures. This would be supported by mutual aid through the health and care system in Croydon if required.

Supplementing the workforce

The number of returning healthcare workers in Croydon has been small (six) and has provided some support in hospital. Local recruitment campaigns such as [Proud to Care](#) and the council's jobs broker, [Croydon Works](#), have brought small number of additional carers into the workforce. In addition, Croydon is a part of a number of south-west London and regional workforce projects, including:

- **Prince's Trust workforce project:** This provides care homes a pool of ready candidates for virtual interviews, for positions including health care assistant roles, volunteer roles, manager roles, administrative roles, kitchen and cleaning staff.
- **London Workforce Hub:** A scheme which can fast-track healthcare professional roles into care homes where required.
- **Allied Health Professionals Hub:** Scheme to fast-track roles such as psychologist, occupational therapists, physios/rehab staff into care homes where required.

Volunteers have played a vital role helping shielded residents and supporting the hubs. We are exploring how volunteers can provide support in care homes when safe to do so.

Wellbeing

While carer confidence is returning, we recognise that the current situation is having a significant unseen impact on our carer workforce. Via our information sessions, newsletter and webpages, we have ensured that carers in care homes can access a variety of support on offer by our care home intervention team (SLaM). This includes specific support during World Mental Health Awareness Week last week, additional sources of financial support for carers, talking therapies and psychological first aid. We have discussed this at one of our

care home information sessions where care homes reported more regular virtual meetings and supervision to support their staff.

The last few months have been an incredibly challenging period for our 126 care homes. We are proud of how they have responded and of the commitment staff have shown to care for the residents across Croydon. We have supported all of our care and support providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic putting in additional support. We are regularly reviewing the support offer with care homes and will continue to work with all our partners to support the challenges being experienced by the provider market. We will ensure that feedback from care home residents and families shapes our continued response over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,



Jo Negrini
Chief Executive
Croydon Council



Matthew Kershaw
Chief Executive and Place
Based Leader for Health
Croydon Health Services NHS
Trust



Elaine Clancy
Joint Chief Nurse Croydon
Health Service NHS Trust
and NHS SWL CCG –
Croydon Borough

CC. **Guy Van-Dichele**, Executive Director Health Well-Being & Adults (DASS)
Rachel Flowers, Director of Public Health

Appendix 1 – Croydon Care Home Response Plan London Region Response

Glossary

Term	Definition
ADASS	Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
CCG	NHS South West London Clinical Commissioning Group
CQC	Care Quality Commission
DASS	Director of Adult Social Services
DoLS	Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
FFP3	Face mask with a filter
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
MDT	Multidisciplinary team meeting
MIT	Market Insight Tool – Online daily return from care homes
One Croydon Alliance	The partners are Croydon Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust, South London and the Maudsley NHS Trust, Age UK Croydon and Croydon GP Collaborative
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RAG	Red, Amber, Green – Method of indicating status and risk
SAB	Safeguarding Adults Board
SLaM	South London and the Maudsley NHS Trust
SWL	South West London – Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth