

Julie Morgan AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JM/00338/20

Heléna Herklots CBE
Commissioner
Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff
CF10 5FL
Helena.HerKlots@olderpeoplewales.com

21 April 2020

Dear Heléna,

Thank you for your letter of 14 April.

All our efforts are currently focussed on dealing with the Covid-19 emergency. We understand the particular and serious impact on people who live and work in care homes and the worry for themselves, their families and friends. I can give you my assurance that we are working closely with Care Inspectorate Wales, Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales, Directors of Social Services and Local Health Boards to ensure that care homes are properly supported.

Responsibility for social care in Wales falls within my portfolio and I am fully sighted on the progress we are making and in particular on the areas where we need to do more. The Social Care Sub-Group chaired by the Deputy Director General is working to address the many issues which are arising across the social care sector – including those referred to in your letter - as a matter of urgency. I would welcome representation from your office on this group. The Deputy Director General has also put in place a series of work streams which includes one for care homes in order to ensure that the necessary actions are completed. I am not convinced that an additional plan of action over and above those arrangements will add value here but we will certainly report on progress via the Social Care Sub-Group.

Turning to the specific issues raised in your letter, I can confirm that there is now a system in place for NHS Shared Services to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to local authorities for onward distribution to care providers, including care homes. To date we have issued over 7 million items of PPE to local authorities to support and protect the social care workforce. Further deliveries of stock are being coordinated by NHS Shared Services and

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

are being issued on a regular basis. We are working to ensure that care providers are fully informed about the process to access stock and that they are using it appropriately in line with the latest guidance.

The Minister for Health and Social Services issued a Written Statement on 7 April about new guidance on the National Covid-19 test approach in Wales. However the situation is evolving and we are working with Public Health Wales as a matter of urgency to increase testing capacity for care home residents, where appropriate, and also for symptomatic care home staff and their families. The approach will also include testing on hospital discharge for people returning to care homes or entering care homes. Our intention is to ensure that people are cared for in the most appropriate place both to aid their own recovery and to protect other care home residents. This may mean a period of step-down care to ensure they receive the care and support they require until they are able to return to their care home.

In terms of guidance and support, Public Health Wales guidance on the 'Admission and Care of Residents during Covid-19' was sent to all registered care home providers on Thursday 9 April. It provides advice on the care of people during the outbreak, the reporting of cases, current testing arrangements, and advice for staff. We will continue to work with Public Health Wales to identify any further guidance required to support care home services during this challenging time. Social Care Wales is also developing its online resources Hub to ensure that information relating to Covid-19 is readily accessible in one place.

You mentioned training on infection control. I can advise that Environmental Health Officers are working with their local health boards and Public Health Wales in order to provide direct support to care homes on this matter.

The Minister for Health and Social Services announced an extra £40 million funding last week to support adult social care services during the coronavirus pandemic. It is intended to help meet the increased costs of basic PPE, food, staffing costs and ICT, which are being incurred by adult social services. It comes from the £1.1 billion fighting fund created by the Welsh Government to support public services to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

Access to NHS services and appropriate treatment is especially important in closed environments such as care homes where multiple at risk people live. I understand you were an instrumental member of the Covid-19 Moral and Ethical Advisory Group (CMEAG Wales) that determined the ethical values and principles for healthcare delivery framework during this pandemic and will appreciate that this applies to all Welsh citizens. We are also working to ensure care homes receive additional nursing support where needed. Whilst support is being offered from district nurses, we are considering how teams can mobilise more of their nursing staff into care homes to provide much needed support at this time. The 111 professional out-of-hours service has been extended to include residential care homes since 31 March, enabling care homes to speak directly to a General Practitioner. General Practitioner support is also being enhanced by the "Attend Anywhere" video consultation service which is now being made available free of charge for widespread adoption in secondary care across Wales, including care homes.

We have been working with local authorities, providers and social care organisations to co-ordinate the collection of data and information that is vital to our collective response to the

Covid-19 pandemic here in Wales. We are considering the best way to publish accurate information about levels of infection and deaths in care homes.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and recognise once again the critical role that care homes and other social care services and their staff are playing in the response to this emergency. We are very grateful for all that they are doing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie', written in a cursive style.

Julie Morgan AC/AM

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