

Our Ref:
Date:10 April 2020

Dear Sir / Madam,

Securing Additional Capacity and Providing Financial Support for Residential Services for Older People

I would like to update you on the actions we have taken to date and will be taking to secure additional capacity for the coming months, to support Essex based care homes to secure additional staffing and to remain financially stable during this difficult time. We have taken unprecedented urgent action under the County Council's constitution to secure significant funding to enable us to do this.

1. We have contacted residential and nursing homes on our Integrated Residential and Nursing (IRN) framework and those who were looking to join the framework in order to secure vacant beds. We have committed to block purchase arrangements for current vacant beds, thus providing additional assurance around capacity, extra income for care providers to secure additional staff and to provide financial security to our valued care home providers.
2. We will also contact all residential and nursing homes who currently care for ECC funded Older People and offer to underwrite any existing ECC funded beds for Older People until 31st March 2021.
3. We may purchase additional beds over the coming weeks and months in order to meet increasing demand, including beds that become available from other funded sources or the private market. All beds secured under the above-mentioned block arrangements will be accessible to ECC, Community Health Providers and Clinical Commissioning Groups across Essex and Southend and Thurrock BC. All block beds are being managed through our Local Bedfinder System (Essex Care Search) for this period.

Staff will contact you to request a placement for an Adult requiring discharge to a residential/nursing bed. You do not need to update our Bedfinder System, however all agreed placements must be shared upon confirmation with the support@essexcaressearch.org inbox to update the system and ensure all system partners have visibility of the capacity across Essex.

4. We have suspended the annual IRN framework refresh exercise until further notice, as this is a time-consuming exercise for both care home providers and ECC staff when we are all rightly focusing our attention on supporting our vulnerable adults. We are reviewing our approach to uplifts for new packages and will update you about this in due course.
5. Reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) will be suspended.
6. We encourage a mutual aid approach and collaboration between care providers, the voluntary sector, individuals, community health providers and other organisations to ensure our most vulnerable residents as safe and appropriately cared for. Any commercial or other considerations need to be agreed between those organisations collaborating or through normal subcontracting arrangements.
7. We will support you to prioritise your staffing and delivery patterns to ensure the highest priority needs of people are met and you will need to closely monitor and review your residents care plans during the period of the pandemic. Of course, we expect this to be done in line with your own risk assessments and in discussion with people and their families.
8. We will ensure you have secure cash flow during the coming months and are not financially disadvantaged by staff absenteeism or from being flexible about care delivery. All residential services are paid on schedule. If you are unable to certify the schedule is correct within the normal time limits it will automatically be released and paid on the usual payment date. Payment for block arrangements to commence from date of agreement between parties. We would also like to reassure you that all our systems are electronic and can be accessed remotely by our staff and providers.

In return, we ask that Care Homes:

1. Support the new Discharge to Assess Guidelines which state that once an adult is clinically stable, they should be transferred to the hospital discharge lounge within one hour and discharged from the acute hospital site within a further 2 hours (3 hours from when the adult became clinically stable).

2. Accept the revised assessment and ISP forms. These are considerably shorter than the forms currently in use. They will not hold all the information that you are accustomed to receiving but will contain essential information to enable you to safely meet the needs of adults.
3. Accept admissions 7 days a week, between 8am – 8pm, with the above timeline being observed during these times.
4. Accept and engage in locally arranged and agreed Trusted Assessor Pathways, to facilitate the timeline shows in point 1 above.
5. Staff up to the beds we have purchased i.e. block purchased beds currently empty require, so they are ready to be used.
6. Agree to follow advice from Public Health England.
7. If you have not already done so, complete and return the attached service user risk spreadsheet and any survey required by ECC and health partners to understand capacity or other emerging trends or issues.

If your organisation is experiencing difficulties you should direct your enquiries as follows:

Non-critical queries. If you cannot find the answer in the portal, email us at provider.resilience@essex.gov.uk. The mailbox is monitored every day between 8:30am and 5:30pm

Safeguarding referrals should be reported in the usual way by emailing socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk or calling 0345 603 7630.

Emergency Duty Out of Hours contact the Emergency Duty Out of Hours Team on 0345 606 1212 or email emergencydutyteamoutofhours@essex.gov.uk

Urgent issues contact our Rapid Response Team on 033 301 31271 which is open between 8:30am and 5:30pm every day.

These arrangements will be reviewed and amended as appropriate and in response to any changing communications from central government. Should we need to consider further arrangements for providers beyond this time period, we will do so and communicate the details of this to you at the earliest opportunity.

Additional guidance and answers to frequently asked questions posed by providers to ECC, plus weekly webinar updates can be found at: <https://www.livingwellessex.org/care-provider-information-hub/> .

I also refer you to the recently published British Geriatrics Society Care Home Covid Guidance:

<https://www.bgs.org.uk/resources/covid-19-managing-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-care-homes>

and Central Government advice on admission and care of people in care homes, published on 2nd April:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-care-of-people-in-care-homes>

We hope making these changes to our commercial arrangements that will give you the security and flexibility to support the needs of as many people as possible, whilst not being financially disadvantaged by the need for people to self-isolate appropriately. I hope this provides you with the reassurance that we will do everything in our power to support you during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Ede', with a small dot at the end.

Steve Ede FCIPS
Head of Procurement

providerresilience@essex.gov.uk