

SUBJECT: CARE HOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND COVID-19

MEETING: Adult Select Committee

DATE: 2nd July 2020

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

To provide the Select Committee with an overview of care homes for older people in Monmouthshire and the impact of coronavirus.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That members note the report.

3. KEY ISSUES:

(a) **Background:** Set out below are the key features of care homes in Monmouthshire:

- There are 16 independent sector care homes in Monmouthshire providing care for people over the age of 65, alongside Severn View and Mardy Park.
- The care homes in Monmouthshire cover a wide spectrum ranging from small converted care homes to large modern purpose built homes operated by corporate organisations.
- There are 659 useable independent sector bed spaces available in Monmouthshire.
- Based on vacancy data provided by homes to the Council weekly, in 2019/20 homes had an average occupancy of 92%.
- Of those bed spaces, a point in time snapshot for February 2020 the Council commissioned an average of 168 beds. This equates to 26% of beds at the time, which is consistent with analyses in previous years. Given the level of market penetration the Council is merely a material influencer in the care homes market.

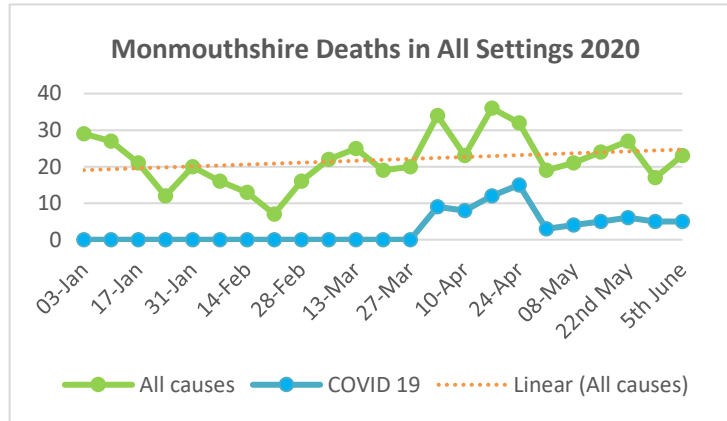
(b) **Coronavirus and Monmouthshire Care Homes:** Looking at the wider picture, the Gwent area was the first in Wales to have reported cases and deaths due to Covid-19. Within Gwent, there has been a discernible pattern in numbers of Covid-19 cases in care homes; which peaked some weeks after peaks in numbers of hospital cases.

Within Monmouthshire there have been 27 deaths in care homes. The tables and graphs below show:

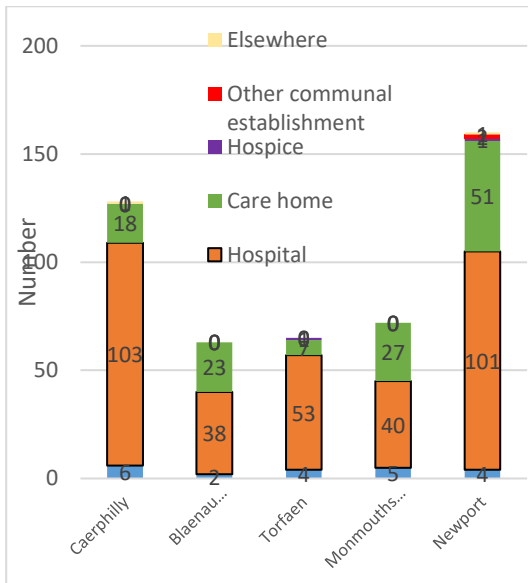
- The dates when Covid-19 deaths peaked in care homes in Monmouthshire.
- Care home deaths in Monmouthshire, relative to all deaths.
- The number of deaths in all settings, including care homes across all Gwent local authorities.
- The impact on occupancy levels.

ONS: Deaths by local authority as at 5th June 2020

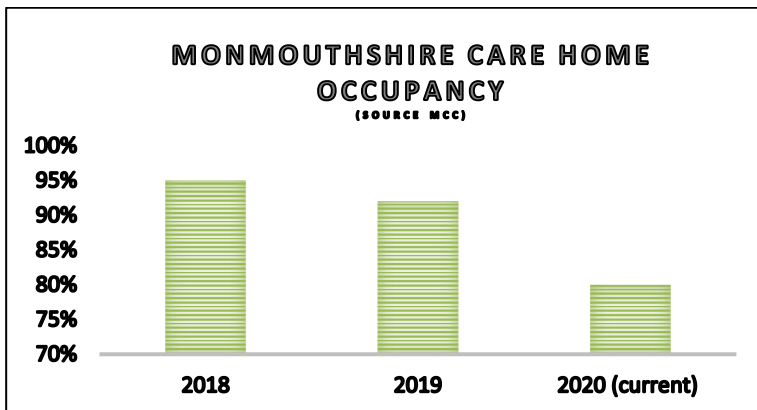
Week	Deaths in Care Homes	
	All causes	COVID-19
20-Mar	3	0
27-Mar	7	0
03-Apr	6	0
10-Apr	4	1
17-Apr	7	2
24-Apr	7	3
01-May	6	2
08-May	8	1
15-May	10	4
22-May	11	5
29-May	9	4
05-June	8	5



ONS – Gwent LA Covid-19 deaths by place of death, for deaths occurring up to 5th June and registered up to 13th June 2020



LA Area	Home	Hospital	Care home	Hospice	Other communal establishment	Elsewhere	Totals
Caerphilly	6	103	18	0	0	1	128
Blaenau Gwent	2	38	23	0	0	0	63
Torfaen	4	53	7	1	0	0	65
Monmouthshire	5	40	27	0	0	0	72
Newport	4	101	51	1	2	1	160
ABUHB Area	21	335	126	2	2	2	488



Currently care home occupancy stands at an average of 80% across Monmouthshire. Whilst occupancy levels in most care homes remain high, factors in a very small number such as a new large care home starting to take placements, restrictions on admissions due to the Escalating Concerns process as well as Covid-19 make the average vacancy level much lower.

(c) **Key Issues for Care Homes:** There have been a number of issues that have had a significant effect on care homes and their ability to respond to the pandemic:

Partnership with Providers: Right from the outset care homes were presented with a monumental challenge. They became responsible for the health and well-being of our most vulnerable citizens at a time of unprecedented anxiety about a deadly virus. With that came a raft of requirements that needed to be responded to immediately, combined with a stark reminder of the consequences should these not be adhered to.

As an authority, our approach has been one based on an understanding that we all have important roles to play in an unprecedented and challenging situation and that this will be best achieved in partnership. We have worked on the basis of positive and productive relationships built up over time and have actively communicated with providers, to provide safe and trustworthy places to seek advice and support and also reliable flows of information in a quickly changing environment. Some of the specific ways this has been achieved are:

- The Commissioning Team undertaking regular, often daily, check-ins with care providers.
- Issuing a Daily Report to senior managers updating on the number of cases within care homes in Monmouthshire.
- Weekly virtual get togethers held with care at home providers, care homes for older people and younger adult support providers.
- Officers from Environmental Health, Finance, Business support, PPE all playing an active role.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): At the outset of the pandemic the provision of Personal Protective Equipment was a source of real anxiety for care home providers. There was a lack of clarity about the equipment required and it became very difficult to source. When supplies became available via the Welsh Government a weekly PPE ordering and delivery system was introduced. The system has worked well and feedback suggests that it has offered the necessary peace of mind.

Infection Control: Care homes have been issued with a plethora of guidance relating to various aspects of infection control. To support providers, Environmental Health Officers have built relationships with care homes and have acted as a source of advice on infection control, guidance interpretation, the use of PPE and testing.

This relationship and advice has been particularly important with the more specific and more intensive work undertaken with care homes with outbreaks of coronavirus.

In addition, the Gwent Standard Operating Procedure requires that anyone being discharged from hospital to a care home must have had a Covid-19 test with a negative result within 48 hours prior to discharge; a fourteen day isolation period will then be required.

Testing: Over the weeks the testing regime has changed and with it responsibilities. Initially there was limited information provided to care homes about mass testing visits

and what to expect. There is also concern about the time taken for test results to be provided.

The introduction of Test, Trace and Protect has generated an anxiety amongst care home operators. The immediacy of the response to someone testing positive and needing to leave a shift, alongside the potential impact of any further staff needing to isolate due to contact could prejudice operational viability. Care home providers are naturally concerned about this possibility.

Financial Sustainability: It is vital that social care providers are able to provide care and support during and after the period of the pandemic and as such we have a role in ensuring their financial sustainability and that they have access to sufficient resources, eg. staffing. From the outset a message of support that the Council would assist if they are experiencing any financial difficulty was given.

The Welsh Government made a Hardship Fund available and enabled social care providers to make claims via the Council for any additional costs as a result of Covid-19. The Council has supported providers through the claims process and has provided specific financial support to providers particularly affected by coronavirus.

In addition, the Council's Business Support Adviser attends Get Togethers and has made information regarding business grants and support available.

4. REVIEW AND NEXT STEPS

We are operating in a period of uncertainty. Whilst we might now be on the 'downward curve' of the pandemic we do not know whether the more robust Test, Trace, Protect regime will potentially expose previously asymptomatic cases and contacts and indeed, whether and when we might endure a second wave. It is unlikely that we will go back to 'normal' at any time soon, if ever.

In our 'new normal' there will inevitably be uncertainty amongst providers about the sustainability of the sector and there may be an altered public perception of care homes that may affect care management and admission decisions.

We have reviewed progress on our interface with care homes in the pandemic to date and looked at the likely landscape in the next few months and would suggest the following as priority areas to be pursued:

- Continue to have an open and multi-faceted partnership approach with care providers. The blend of individual conversations, virtual meetings and electronic communications has elicited a high percentage response from providers across the sector.
- Work with the sector to understand likely demand and capacity for care home beds as we move forward and consider how this can be responded to in a mutually supportive manner.
- Ensure that stocks of PPE continue to be available to providers as needed and that the system of distribution remains in a manner that is proportionate to that need.

- Keep in place the system of active and prompt support to providers regarding infection control. Key Environmental Health Officers have developed relationships with providers and have become a trusted source of support in an unclear and changing environment.
- Continue to offer a suite of financial support options to ensure the financial sustainability of the sector and be proactive in making such offers where sustainability is considered likely to be an issue. Lobby Welsh Government to ensure that funding is available to providers post 30th June 2020 and give consideration to future Council funding.
- Explore pragmatic solutions to the impact the requirement for 28 days post confirmed case to have elapsed before new admissions to care homes are possible with the sector.
- Influence an improved communication flow around testing and test results for care providers to enable them to be better informed of timescales, procedures and expectations.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. However, as a Council we need to be mindful of the potential financial impact of Covid-19 on care homes and social care providers generally. Specifically it would be prudent to give consideration to funding issues post the provision of Welsh Government funding and the impact of the 28 days post Covid-19 requirement.

6. CONSULTEES:

Social Care and Health DMT – 24th June 2020

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Office for National Statistics website

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