



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Julie Morgan AM
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Government
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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Irrelevant & Sensitive

Rydym yn croesawu
galwadau yn Gymraeg

Adeiladau Cambrian
Sgwâr Mount Stuart
Caerdydd CF10 5FL

Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL

14 April 2020

Dear Julie,

I write following our meeting last week where I raised concerns about the situation for residents and staff in care homes, and the anxieties being felt by their loved ones. We know from examples in the UK and across the world that care homes are particularly vulnerable to severe Covid-19 outbreaks and that, due to the underlying health conditions of residents, they experience high rates of mortality as a result.

We heard today from the Minister for Health and Social Services that there have been confirmed or suspected cases in nearly a third of Wales's care homes (75 confirmed and 217 suspected). This is an emergency that requires urgent action.

I know that the Welsh Government wants to do all it can to protect older people living in care homes and care home staff, and minimise cases of Covid-19 and deaths in care homes. I therefore urge the Welsh Government to take action to:

- Ensure PPE is delivered effectively and consistently to care homes, and that they have adequate supplies of other infection control materials such as hand sanitizers
- Ensure that testing is available for residents showing symptoms of Covid-19 so that appropriate care and treatment can be provided safely by care staff and others.
- Ensure that residents are able to access NHS services and treatment that they may need (including for Covid-19) and that there are no blanket policies

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.

applied excluding care home residents from receiving hospital treatment if their condition warrants it.

- Ensure that all care homes are able to quickly access healthcare support and guidance including any need for training, for example, on infection control.
- Ensure that all available staff are able to work through ensuring testing for staff who may be self-isolating because of symptoms they, or other members of their household, are experiencing
- Ensure emergency funding reaches care homes quickly for increased costs of agency staff to fill gaps; to meet needs there may be for higher staffing levels; and to meet additional costs such as infection control.
- Ensure that information is captured and published about levels of infection and deaths, so there is transparency and so that the data informs decisions including on resource allocation.

Given the level of concern amongst older people and their families and friends about the safety of residents in care homes, and the staff who are working there, I believe the Welsh Government should announce a specific plan of action to minimise the spread of Covid-19 in care homes based on the above measures.

I believe that this would be most effective if, as Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, you took personal leadership for this, including reporting on progress to the Senedd and the public.

Without concerted action, older people living in care homes could be left significantly exposed to this virus, putting their lives and the lives of care home staff at risk.

I will be making a public statement about my concerns around care homes tomorrow and I would welcome an announcement as soon as possible of the specific work the Welsh Government will undertake to address these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales