

Mr Mark Lee  
Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People  
Dept of Health

Dear Mark

**Re: Clinical Analysis of Discharge Patterns from HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland during early 2020 and any Link with COVID-19 Outbreaks in Care Homes**

Thank you for your response to my letter of 16 November.

I appreciate the efforts you have gone to in your reply to reinforce some of the points made in Dr Herity's report. However in my initial letter I pointed out that ihcp was not in a position to question Dr Herity's report nor do we wish to. The credibility of Dr Herity's findings is not an issue, rather there are points from the care home perspective that we believe should have been taken into account in any wider publication of the report. The crux of the issues highlighted in my letter relate to the fact that this report was commissioned by the Department and issued in a press release with no engagement with, or notice to, the care home sector. The damage in any relationship is not with the Health Trusts it is with the Department as we believe such action is inconsistent with partnership working.

Had the findings of this clinical analysis report been used in conjunction with input from the care home sector then perhaps a more public- facing communication could have been jointly issued.

Your letter has turned many questions back to the care home sector with no answers provided on a number of the key points:-

- Why was the report commissioned and why was there no engagement with the sector ?
- Why was the report issued in a press release with 20 minutes notice given to care homes- what was the rush?
- On the point in the report about discharges over a two week period you state that the report does not claim that all 465 people discharged to care homes during the two weeks analysed were tested and that is why the term 'did not test positive'

rather than 'tested negative' was used. I would suggest that any member of the public reading this report would assume that all of the 465 people discharged had been tested and this use of words is ambiguous.

- Care homes resisting discharges was discussed on many occasions and was part of the feedback into the RLI meetings.
- Ihcp continues to highlight concerns around the increasing footfall into care homes, the increased community transmission and the need for rapid testing of all people visiting a care home in any capacity. You say that there are separate discussions related to testing and visiting and that you won't rehearse those. Again there are a number of ihcp letters that have not been replied to regarding these issues and there are many questions outstanding.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Shepherd  
Ihcp CEO