



The Relatives & Residents Association

Email: judy.downey@relres.org

Date: 22 May 2020

Ian Trenholm
Chief Executive
Care Quality Commission
By email: ian.trenholm@cqc.org.uk

Dear Ian,

The Relatives & Residents Association works with older adults using residential care services, as well as in their own homes. We also work with families, advocates and carers. CQC's purpose is to safeguard adults in receipt of care from registered services and to promote the improvement of these services. It is with regret that we express our disappointment with the role CQC has taken during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was clear from the outset that care services would be in peril and yet, when Public Health England (PHE) stated that *"it was very unlikely that anyone receiving care in a care home or in the community will become infected"*, CQC failed to speak out immediately to refute this ill-judged view. CQC announced that routine inspections of care homes would be suspended. With family visits banned in most care homes, many residents felt totally abandoned.

CQC produced an Emergency Framework on 1 May but this did not include detailed policy or practice guidance to help providers ensure good communication to reassure families or help to argue for and organise central supplies to protect staff and older people using services. No reassurance was provided for them or their representatives on how safety and wellbeing would be promoted with the disappearance of visits from family members and others. Many remain anxious about the impact which visiting restrictions and isolation measures are having, and the deterioration of their physical and mental health as a direct result. This lack of oversight and scrutiny has been compounded by emergency legislation allowing for the 'easement' of local authorities' duties under the Care Act, the suspension of complaints investigation by the LGO, and the discharge of C-19 patients from hospital to care homes.

It is a legal requirement for providers to immediately report deaths in care homes to CQC. This information, had it been made promptly available, would have helped to inform the national picture much sooner. However, the CQC's failure to produce these figures urgently for public use resulted in the Government not being made aware of the true seriousness of the situation in care homes. In addition, the regulator failed to openly represent the voice and needs of the sector for PPE, testing and tracing, and other much needed resources.

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We urge you to urgently reconsider your approach to ensure and protect the rights of people using care services. CQC should be:

- Representing the rights of all the approximately 500,000 individuals living in care homes and ensuring that they have parity with the NHS in fighting infection and saving lives
- Using its leadership voice in speaking up and raising awareness of the care sector's needs, particularly for the supply of PPE, infection control training and regular and reliable testing for care staff, residents and older people receiving or needing services
- Identifying where urgent oversight, intervention or professional support is needed, encouraging communication with and feedback from service users, families and friends
- Prioritising settings with a history of serious breaches of the Regulations, those without a manager, with a high staff turnover and those not inspected for three or more years
- Promoting awareness of the particular needs of people with communication difficulties and sensory impairments, and identifying services where virtual means of contacting people using the service are not sufficient or appropriate.

We look forward to your response to these points and would be pleased to provide further information on any of the issues highlighted,

Yours sincerely

Judy Downey
Chair
The Relatives & Residents Association

Copy:

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair, Joint Human Rights Committee
Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Chair, Health and Social Care Select Committee

Status: As the issues raised in this letter are in the public interest, it could be released as a public document

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