



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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To:

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CC:

Social Care Sector COVID – 19 Support
Taskforce

11th August 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I am grateful for the considerable support and advice that I have received from the sector in the work of the Taskforce so far. I will be providing a more general update on the work in the next few days.

We are sending out updates about progress through the Social Care COVID-19 Update which goes to all Providers and to Local Authorities from the Department of Health and Social Care. The outline details of the Advisory Groups and Chairs were published on the Gov.UK website on Friday 7th August 2020.

I thought it would be helpful to provide a bit more information to the key stakeholders about the Terms of Reference (ToR) with a short summary of some of the issues that the Advisory Groups have been considering. Please find attached the ToR of the Advisory Groups.

Included in this letter is a summary provided by each of the Chairs of the issues they have been considering. The summary provided by the Chairs is as follows:

People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People – Alex Fox (Shared Lives), Rachel Moody (Lived experience Co-Chair) and Trevor Wright (InSight Autism CIC)

The advisory group for people with learning disabilities and autistic people has explored the following issues for our communities:

- The support and resources needed for families, households and communities to keep people safe, well and included at home in their communities at a time when people are increasingly isolated, under-supported, or approaching crisis;
- stabilising support for provider organisations and the workforce;
- increasing the use and availability of data and research which is hampering attempts to learn and improve support during COVID-19;
- reducing the use of less safe larger group or institutional settings and building community approaches
- the issues facing the most disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities from BAME communities
- keeping people informed and connected including digital inclusion and accessible information

The Group feels strongly that health and care are inextricably linked and have discussed the urgent need to improve people's mental and physical health and reduce high mortality rates, including those associated with high obesity, diabetes and psychotropic medication rates, as well as rights issues including application of DNAR notices.

Older People and People Living with Dementia – Caroline Abrahams (Age UK) and Kate Lee (Alzheimer's Society)

- Members of the Group have engaged people from the third sector, health and social care providers, regulators, academics, clinicians, practitioners and policy professionals. Perspectives of people with lived experience have been engaged with directly and current Alzheimer's Society and Age UK surveys have been used as a source of information.
- Its final report will include a small number of conclusions and recommendations, mostly focused on what needs to happen to keep older people safe and well and to improve and sustain their wellbeing, between now and April 2021.

Mental Health and Well Being – Kathy Roberts (Association of Mental Health Providers) and Stephen Chandler (DASS Oxfordshire County Council)

- The group has been focussed on the immediate and priority actions and guidance required for stability and continuity in the social care sector, in order to maintain mental health and wellbeing-and crucially, keep people safe-as we move into the next phase of the pandemic and into the winter months.
- The group has reviewed the impact of C-19 on people with mental health needs, the commissioning, delivery, continuity and adaptation of services for them and related workforce issues.
- Has considered the impact of C-19 and the initial lockdown requirements, on the safety and wellbeing and believe this perspective will be central to the advice it offers to the Task Force.

Self-Directed Support – Jenny Pitts (NDTi) and Dr Ossie Stuart (Trustee of SCIE)

- The Self-Directed Support Advisory Group is taking a broad definition of Self – Directed Support and aim to include a wide-ranging representation of people wanting to retain control over their lives whilst staying safe during the pandemic.
- There is an intention to be radical, to challenge the actions that may leave people disempowered and feeling abandoned.
- The key issue that has been raised is the perceived lack of trust – which the group feel it results in a lack of flexibility and autonomy necessary to make important decisions in a timely way.

Carers - Emily Holzhausen (Carers UK) and Dame Philippa Russell

- Insight gathered in the group involving carers, academics, carers organisations incl. young carers, disability and age organisations, NHSE&I, local government representatives and employers and providers.
- Main issues covered include carers' resilience and other aspects of their lives to focus on how we support and prepare carers better. Some of the issues highlighted are:
 - o Care services not being fully up and running and the challenges this posed for workers who are carers returning to work, without a furlough extension.
 - o Children caring i.e. young carers, where families need adult social care input in order to return to school and this is not yet in place.
 - o Breaks of different kinds for carers, including opening up of day services and the challenges around residential respite/overnight respite with infection control/14-day quarantine, and trying to look at how can we make sure carers get good breaks.
- Other issues discussed related to the increased need being managed by families and how this must be reflected in increased service provision/support, the implications for funding over winter and next year's resource allocation.

BAME communities – Cedi Fredrick (Chair North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust) and Tricia Pereira (Head of Operations Adults Social Care & Adult Safeguarding, London Borough of Merton)

- The BAME Advisory Group have invited representatives from academia, provider organisations and representative bodies to participate, and will inviting faith-based organisations to contribute to this work.
- The Group will focus specifically on BAME people who are in receipt of social care services and the BAME workforce within social care, including residential and domiciliary care for older people, and residential and community services for people with learning disabilities, sensory, autism and mental health needs.

Workforce – Vic Rayner (National Care Forum) and Colin Angel (UKHCA)

- The Workforce Advisory Group has covered (a) What has and should change for the front-line workforce; (b) ensuring we have the staff we need; (c) security and wellbeing of staff and (d) organising the workforce. There is an emerging theme (amongst several others) about the importance of clear and consistent guidance.
- The most pressing issue, and one which is more urgent than the deadlines for reporting from the taskforce, is the advice employers need about social care workers who have been shielding returning to work safely.

Good Practice, Guidance and Innovation – Kathryn Smith (SCIE) and Professor Robin Miller (University of Birmingham)

- Feedback has been collated separately around the three themes of good practice, guidance and innovation and recommendations are being made in respect to each one.
- Key issues are accessibility and practicality of both guidance and information related to good practice, and the use and availability of technology to drive innovation.

The Advisory Groups will be presenting their findings to the taskforce during August.

Yours sincerely,

David Pearson

David Pearson

Chair of Social Care Sector COVID -19 Support Taskforce

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