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In March Nottinghamshire County Council developed a portal to assist with data collection in relation to the Covid outbreak. This was managed and developed by an external company Newton who were experienced with this form of data collection and had finished similar work in other local authorities. They had worked directly with government agencies to manage the criteria required to inform the care market. This portal allowed us in the quality and market management team (QMMT) to collate information in relation to outbreaks, staffing numbers and PPE stocks. The information was sent to providers twice a week where they completed an online proforma which when updated directly informed a Nottinghamshire County Council dashboard and enabled us to run reports and make contact where any issues where flagged. Where there were any shortfalls in staffing reported through the portal, assistance was provided where required. In the beginning a number of services did show on the system as requiring staff but this was down to user error which again was followed up and rectified where possible.

In respect of the outbreak and support for social care providers a team of relief support staff was set up to ensure a response team was available in case of emergencies. We have supported only a small number of residential care homes by providing these relief staff as most have managed to implement their business continuity plans. Our process initially was to ensure providers had robust contingency plans in place which many did, with some having bank staff and others acquiring agency staff for specified times. We asked that providers ensured when using agencies that there was no cross over into other services and that an agreement was in place for agency to provide a dedicated team to that home for the specified period to minimise the spread of any infections. Once all of these avenues had been explored / utilised and there was still a requirement for further staffing within homes then the process to access the relief team was activated. The relief team would be advised about the nature of the service, the staff requirements and the skill set required to support the home / service through this emergency period. Providers were encouraged not to share staff across settings if they have more than one home in the County and were offered a grant to ensure they could recruit for any gaps in staffing, again this was to minimise any risk of infection spread.

The first service to access the relief team was in June 2020 and to date there have been 6 Older Persons residential / nursing settings who have required support from the relief team. The majority of support has been required in August, Sept and Oct and appears to be a direct response to what is being called the 2nd wave.

Providers initially had daily communication bulletins from Nottinghamshire County Council which included, updated guidance and policy and pathways. This communication has continued to date but is now sent twice a week. QMMT officers have dedicated portfolios for each service within the county. There has been regular contact made with all providers to check well-being, staffing issues, exploring difficulties relating to support within services directly in relation to COVID.

A number of working groups have been set up to ensure information is shared with other professional teams within the CCG’s who have also supported with issues within care settings. These continue to be of a supportive nature to providers. Nottinghamshire County Council and CCG’s have also run a number of webinars which were interactive and supportive sessions with question and answer sessions concluding each assembly.

There is an online best practice toolkit which is updated as changes to policy / practice is made and provides contacts and links to associated .gov pages or web pages providing further information. Again, the link is attached to each of the comms sent out twice weekly. QMMT continue to work with other agencies and have regular reports in relation to outbreaks within care settings where direct contact is then made with the service. If there is a requirement for further intervention this will be decided through the means of an Incident Management Team.