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Local Authority Chief Social Work Officers

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Dear Colleagues

These are exceptional times for us all requiring every one of you and your staff to go well beyond the call of duty in public service. I want to extend my sincere thanks to all of you, and would ask that you convey my gratitude to your staff as well.

It is recognised that adults living in care homes often have multiple health and care needs and many are frail with varying levels of dependence. Current estimates are that over 40,000 residents live in the 1083 adult care homes across Scotland. The vast majority of adult care homes are for older people (75%) and 75% of these care homes are run by the private sector, with the remainder run by voluntary sector and local authority/ health board sectors. As you know, adults living in care homes often have multiple health and care needs and many are frail with varying levels of dependence. Many are inevitably at greater risk of poorer outcomes if they were to contract COVID-19 due to conditions such as frailty, multiple co-morbidity, pre-existing cardio-respiratory conditions or neurological conditions.

Care homes are environments that have proved to be particularly susceptible to Coronavirus and this has regrettably and sadly led to too many deaths and as such we require urgent additional whole system support to protect residents and staff. This additional support will come from the Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Health Boards, and the regulatory and improvement bodies.

This introductory note sets out in summary the detail within the attached pack that constitutes the Scottish Government's comprehensive support arrangements for care homes to date and what still needs put in place. This is expected to ensure appropriate clinical and care professionals across Scotland take direct responsibility for the professional support required for each care home in each area.

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Much has been put in place already at a local and national level, including the emergency legislation, an assortment of guidance, provision of PPE, commitments around workforce salaries and the real living wage; £50m of initial investment for provision of resilience and sustainability of services; roll out of testing for staff and residents and the establishment of a Care Home Rapid Action Group advised by a CMO/CNO led Care Homes Clinical and Professional Advisory Group.

Support and oversight going forward

Care Homes for older people are a vital part of the panoply of provision in our communities and will be so for years to come. Residents, staff and communities need to have confidence that the care provided in every care home is as clinically safe as it possibly can be in the context of Coronavirus. There is still much to do. In the accompanying pack there is:

1. Revised and final version of guidance for care homes.

In summary, this guidance sets out:

- That care homes may require more clinical input to manage residents' needs at this time. NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships must work closely together to ensure those needs are met.
- That decisions about care and treatment for residents should be on an individual basis, based on the person's best interests and in consultation with the individual or their families/representatives, taking account of any expressed wishes contained in their Anticipatory Care Plan
- The range of factors and provisions that must be taken into account in the admission of any person into a care home; the arrangements that must be in place to maintain effective clinical standards to prevent outbreak or to manage an outbreak if it occurs; testing; workforce planning and deployment; staff support and wellbeing; support and engagement with General Practice; support for palliative and end of life care.

2. Amendments to the Coronavirus Bill

In summary these amendments allow for:

- A package of measures/ powers as part of the Coronavirus Bill to provide assurance to those involved in the care home sector, including staff and particularly those using these services and their families, so that in the event there is significant risk to those using services, or a provider was unable to continue to deliver care due to failure, Scottish Ministers and public bodies have the power to intervene.
3. A clear statement on expectations providing enhanced clinical and care professional oversight during Covid-19.

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In summary this document sets out:

- The expected new and additional responsibilities on clinical and professional leads in every local authority and Health Board that will provide daily support and oversight of the care provided in care homes in their area.
- This includes arrangements for testing and Infection Prevention Control arrangements, PPE in particular.

Thank you again for all you and your teams are doing to help ensure Scotland's care homes can be safe environments for their residents and staff through the Covid emergency.



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