

**Report to:** East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

**Date of meeting:** 17 September 2020

**By:** Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**Title:** Support to Care Homes and Covid-19 Impact on Black Asian Minority Ethnic Groups

**Purpose:** To inform the Health and Wellbeing Board of support provided to Care Homes during the Covid19 crisis and work the local health and social care system are doing to support people from Black, Asian Minority Ethnic staff working in the care sector.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to consider and comment on the report.**

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### **1. Background**

1.1 This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with a summary of the support being provided to Care Homes during the Covid-19 crisis and the work the local health and social care system are doing to support people from Black, Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff working in the care sector.

1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has raised particular challenges for care home residents, their families and the staff who look after them. Staff working in care homes have played a key role in the response to Covid-19. Care homes have opened their doors to rapid admissions from both the community and hospitals, and staff have worked hard to understand residents' wishes and to ensure that care plans respect these. Staff have gone above and beyond in caring for residents and have, in many instances, learned new competencies and skills to do so.

1.3 As early as April 2020, the Kings Fund reported 'Many care homes and the staff who work in them have been brought to their knees by Covid-19. The emotional trauma of losing a significant number of residents (referred to as 'family members' by some homes), who staff have known for a number of years cannot be overstated. Meanwhile, the impact of Covid-19 on staff cover is felt acutely in the small teams that are typical in care homes.'

1.4 Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, Public Health England reports<sup>1</sup> have provided clear evidence that older age, ethnicity, male sex and geographical area are associated with a higher risk of getting Covid-19, experiencing more severe symptoms and higher rates of death. The evidence suggests both ethnicity and low socio-economic status are independently associated with higher Covid-19 mortality.

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/892085/disparities\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892085/disparities_review.pdf) and [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/892376/COVID\\_stakeholder\\_engagement\\_synthesis\\_beyond\\_the\\_data.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf)

1.5 The unequal impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities is thought to be due to a wide range of inter-related factors such as occupational risk (BAME staff tend to be in higher exposure roles); socio-economic inequalities including poorer housing and riskier living conditions; use of public transport; and greater risk of health conditions which increase severity of Covid-19 e.g. obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Stakeholders<sup>1</sup> reported that racism, discrimination, stigma made it harder for BAME groups to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or healthcare, and public health information and media messages may not have been culturally appropriate for all BAME or lower socio-economic groups, resulting in stay safe messages not being received.

## 2. Supporting information

2.1 Throughout the Covid19 crisis, Health and Social Care have been supporting care homes and care providers in a number of ways. Some examples are provided below:

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

2.2 The key elements of the East Sussex response are:

- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has procured PPE to support local Health and Social Care providers during Covid-19. Providers have been able to access this stock, free of charge, since April. The PPE has been used to support providers whose stocks are running critically low, and where all other options of supply have been exhausted
- Between April and August, 563,018 items of procured stock were issued
- More broadly, the Adult Social Care and Health Department have been responsible for the issuing of both Local Resilience Forum PPE supplies, which have been allocated to Local Authorities to support local businesses through the pandemic. These supplies have been used to support a wide range of businesses including Registrars; pharmacies, schools and funeral directors
- At the time of writing (19/08/2020) 989,034 items from Local Resilience Forum (LRF) stock have been issued since the beginning of April
- Alongside the provision of PPE, all national PPE guidance has been shared with independent sector care providers throughout the pandemic through the Adult Social Care provider bulletin. Telephone support has also been provided to care homes by Public Health, the Adult Social Care Market Support Team and Clinical Commissioning Group Infection Control Team

### Infection prevention and control (IPC)

2.3 The key elements of the East Sussex response are:

- As part of the Sussex Covid-19 response, Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have formed an Infection Prevention and Control Care Homes work stream. In partnership with ESCC Adult Social Care, ESCC Public Health Team and Acute and Community providers this work supports the Covid-19 response to care homes
- By the end of May 2020, Infection Prevention Training had been provided by the CCG Infection Control Nurse Specialists to all providers including Nursing and Residential care homes and Domiciliary providers across Sussex. This training included the use of Personal Protective Equipment
- In addition, Sussex CCGs in partnership with local authorities are implementing the National Infection Prevention training programme which includes the practical application of Personal Protective Equipment
- The Sussex CCGs Infection Prevention and Control team provide a follow up call to all care homes and providers who declare a suspected or confirmed COVID19 outbreak via Public Health England outbreaks reports. This call includes providing homes with advice and guidance on following national IPC and PPE guidelines for Covid-19.

Advice is provided on how to isolate and cohort residents within the care home environment according to their circumstances

- Care homes are also given support on ensuring IPC measures in relation to staff and the care home environment are taken to limit transmission this includes advice on managing laundry, refuse and cleaning regimes
- The weekly Incident Management Team response call chaired by Public Health is attended by representatives from across health and social care. It ensures that additional support regarding infection prevention and control is in place to assist homes experiencing an outbreak

#### The experiences of Black, Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff during the current Covid-19 pandemic

2.4 The key elements of the East Sussex response are:

- A BAME Covid-19 Disparity Programme has been set up by the NHS Improvement and NHS England (NHSI/E) nationally and a South East BAME Mortality Disparity Advisory Panel has also been established. Sussex Health and Care Partnership is co-ordinating a programme of work to address the disparity of the impact of Covid-19 for the BAME population and health and social care workforce
- As part of this Programme Hastings, Brighton & Hove and Crawley have undertaken studies into Covid-19 and the impact on the BAME population in their local areas. Hasting Voluntary Action published their report in August. The report considers the causes, understanding and awareness within the BAME community of Hastings and St Leonards of the increased risk they faced from Covid-19; it begins to consider the effect of increased risk based on the pre Covid-19 experiences of the BAME community of using NHS services and looks at the formal and informal networks and sources of influence within the local BAME communities. The recommendations from the reports will be considered by the Sussex Health and Care Partnership and we will ensure they link into the East Sussex Race Disparities group's work.
- Risk assessment templates and supporting information for managers has been prepared and shared with Adult Social Care independent sector care providers. There is an ongoing dialogue with the independent sector about the impact of Covid-19 on the BAME workforce
- The [East Sussex Outbreak Management Plan](#) covers approaches to deal with outbreaks in a range of settings including care homes, and plans to support more vulnerable groups including BAME
- ESCC staff were invited to share their pandemic experiences and help us plan for recovery by completing the Time to Talk survey. A summary of the [staff survey feedback](#) has been published on the intranet. The feedback will help inform ongoing reviews about working arrangements over the next few months. The data is being analysed into themes affecting specific groups such as frontline workers, BAME staff and those shielding
- We have also conducted online and telephone survey with our residents to understand how the pandemic has affected them. This data has been analysed across various demographics and used by various teams to plan recovery and services during a further outbreak
- An ESCC working group has been set up in response to the Covid-19 related disparities and to prepare ourselves for Recovery and/or a potential second wave which addresses any underlying inequalities in how our staff and population from different backgrounds have been affected by the pandemic
- In ESCC a range of training and development opportunities already exist, including those listed below:

- Equality & Diversity elearning – mandatory for all staff at induction
  - Unconscious Bias elearning
  - Racial, National and Ethnic Equality elearning
  - Trans Awareness elearning
  - Social Model of Disability elearning
  - Neurodiversity in the workplace elearning
  - Equality & Diversity course
  - Equality & Diversity for Managers course
  - Mitigating Unconscious Bias course
  - Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Community Awareness elearning
- On 15<sup>th</sup> July Diversity Resource International ran a Resilience in Adversity seminar in East Sussex, supported by ESCC. The event was a community conversation with local people from ethnic minority communities with circa 100 people on the call. One of the key themes from the seminar was the need for a consistent and sustainable commitment to addressing the challenges of inequality from East Sussex statutory organisations; using our social purpose to develop mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships within the local community.
  - The future of the Community Hubs established during Covid-19 are currently being decided and there is an opportunity to ensure they are developed with an enhanced focus on reaching ethnic minority populations.
  - Adult Social Care and Health Department (ASCH) has commissioned Activmob to undertake research with ASCH service users and wider population to understand how our services and communication have fared during lockdown. The learning from this can be shared more widely. Recruitment of participants for this research has been done to ensure that there is proportionate representation from all strands of equality.
  - Recognising that there has been an increased incidence of racism to people from ethnic minority communities and possibly to our staff, we are developing Continuing Professional Development training for our internal staff which coaches on how to coach staff who have experienced racial harm.

### Mental health and wellbeing support for care workers and managers

2.5 The key elements of the East Sussex response are:

- East Sussex County Council has a web page dedicated to resources and support available for social care providers and the wellbeing of their staff:  
<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/socialcare/providers/covid-19-asc/staff-wellbeing/>
- The web page includes sections on:
  - Psychological support for staff
  - Wellbeing information and resources
  - Dealing with stress, trauma and death
  - Free visa extensions for care workers
- The Adult Social Care provider bulletin regularly promotes this support and highlights different types of support available for care staff. This includes guidance, training; services staff can access for support; resource packs; posters; checklists and guidance for managers.
- We are working on a briefing on worker's rights specifically looking at Covid-19 and care homes which we encourage our providers to share with agency staff to enhance the understanding of rights on accessing PPE equipment, risk assessments, shift work and access to testing.

## Mental Health services and the impact of Covid-19

2.6 The key elements of the East Sussex response are:

- Support targeted at BAME populations in East Sussex has continued throughout the pandemic. Supporting and engaging with local communities in the Hastings and Eastbourne area ensuring people get access to advice and support for health as well as mental health as early as possible according to their needs. Also, specific support for the Gypsy and Traveller communities has continued to provide support during Covid-19
- East Sussex has a Race Equalities Support Resource that supports engagement approaches for local services as well as translation available for people who don't speak English. In some cases, the officer will provide liaison support for people experiencing difficulty with mental health services. They review and monitor all mental health services quarterly to ensure they are accessible and engaging with local BAME populations
- Throughout the pandemic in East Sussex, local telephone support and advice has also been available for all levels of mental health through a mental health action line
- Local mental health services are now developing their approaches for re-establishing local services and how they can re-establish provision safely

### **3. Conclusion and recommendations**

3.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to consider and comment on the report.

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### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None