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England

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Weekly Care Homes Evidence Digest

Prevention and control of COVID-19 in home care/care homes settings
6th August 2020

Summary

This weekly digest contains a selection of evidence published in the last 7 days, in relation to the prevention and control of COVID-19 in home care/care home settings. We search a number of Covid-19 review repositories, an existing PHE Covid-19 evidence digest, Ovid Medline and Embase, Social Care Online, medRxiv (pre-print server) and various websites. We select peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed publications (pre-prints), as well as systematic reviews, guidance and evidence summaries.

The digest is produced by PHE [Knowledge and Library Services](#) (KLS), in conjunction with a small editorial team.

We do not accept responsibility for the availability, reliability or content of the items included in this resource and do not necessarily endorse the views expressed within them. Our intent is to highlight early emerging research findings as well as research that has been subject to peer review and wider scrutiny.

This week the digest includes: Articles on intervention packages to support care homes in France and Spain, a non-smartphone-based digital app for contact tracing in long-term care facilities in the US, the impact of the pandemic on social care staff in Pakistan and the US, and a review of care home visiting policies across Canada. From the UK, a service evaluation of a nurse-led enhanced SARS-CoV-2 testing strategy in care homes in Norfolk. Several reports (from the Health Foundation, the Nuffield Trust and NHS Confederation and NHS Providers) on the impact of COVID-19 on the social care sector and implications for social care reform. Also, a report from the Social Care Institute for Excellence on lessons learned from hospital discharge and avoidance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, a link to recent guidance updates, statistical reports and news.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Publication date	Title / URL	Journal / Article type	Digest
25.07.2020	Dying from Covid-19: Loneliness, end-of-life discussions and support for patients and their families in nursing homes and hospitals. A national register study	Journal of Pain and Symptom Management / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national Swedish Register of Palliative Care was used. All expected deaths from Covid-19 in nursing homes and hospitals were compared with, and contrasted to, deaths in a reference population (deaths in 2019). • A total of 1346 expected Covid-19 deaths in nursing homes (n=908) and hospitals (n=438) were analyzed. • Fewer EOL discussions with patients were held compared with deaths in 2019 (74% vs. 79%, p<0.001) and dying with someone present was much more uncommon (59% vs. 83%, p<0.0001). • Relatives were present at time of death in only 13% and 24% of the cases in nursing homes and hospitals, respectively (p<0.001). The corresponding figures for staff were 52% and 38% (p<0.0001).
28.07.2020	Helping nursing homes to manage the COVID-19 crisis: an illustrative example from France	Journal of the American Geriatrics Society / Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The French government created dedicated local platforms to support older adults and the French regions rapidly deployed an organizational strategy for helping nursing homes to manage the COVID-19 epidemic. This report describes the platform’s resources and actions for helping nursing homes to care for older patients with COVID-19 in the Indre-et-Loire county, such as: • A specialist telephone hotline coordinated by a team of geriatricians and linked to specialists; • Out-of-hospital mobile geriatric medicine teams comprising a nurse and a geriatrician; • Regional videoconference to de-isolate nursing homes by enabling dialogue on common problems and by providing equal levels of access to information; • Support team for multidisciplinary decision making comprising a geriatrician, an infectious disease specialist, and a palliative care physician.

<p>29.07.2020</p>	<p>Media Effects on Individual Worldview and Wellness for Long Term Care Residents Amid The COVID-19 Virus</p>	<p>The Gerontologist / Article</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article highlights the need for increased scrutiny of the value and potentially adverse effect the 24-hour news cycle has on individuals, particularly residents in a long-term care setting amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. • The images in the media often center around death, dying, seclusion and shortages of supplies. Although these potential outcomes amid COVID-19 are extremely real, the media walks a fine line between informing the public and inciting panic. • For socially isolated people for whom television and other media is their primary source of information and contact with the outside world, excessive exposure can cause anxiety and depression.
<p>29.07.2020</p>	<p>Covid-19 and Community Care in South Korea</p>	<p>Journal of Gerontological Social Work / Letter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2012 to 2017, the number of long-term residential care facility beds per thousand people aged 65 years old and over in South Korea significantly increased from 51.1 to 60.9, and the number of beds in long-term care hospitals was the 36.7 per thousand people, the highest among OECD countries (OECD, 2019). • Care institutions are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the high population density - the number of beds in one room is 5.12 on average in long-term care hospitals. • In 2018, the Korean Government announced its “Community Care” policy initiative to shift the paradigm from institution-based to community-based care. This initiative has now received attention from advocates and researchers who wish to reduce cluster infections during pandemics.
<p>30.07.2020</p>	<p>Lessons Learned - Outbreaks of COVID-19 in Nursing Homes</p>	<p>Journal of the American Geriatrics Society / Letter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff must be supported with adequate sick leave and coverage to prevent presenteeism. • Any patient with even vague symptoms should be moved to a private room and tested. • Be able to test residents and staff quickly. • Assume everyone has COVID-19 in an outbreak until they test negative. Residents exposed to infected staff should be in private rooms until their tests return negative. Exposed

			<p>staff should not return to work until they test negative and remain asymptomatic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily surveillance of both staff and residents for COVID-19 symptoms and exposures, followed by rapid isolation and testing. • Universal PPE. • Limiting traffic through nursing homes. • Physical distancing for staff.
31.07.2020	COVID-19 in Nursing Homes: Calming the Perfect Storm	Journal of the American Geriatrics Society / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US model of paying huge margins for Medicare short-stay residents while underpaying for long-stay Medicaid residents is broken. • More staff are needed in nursing homes and they need to be better paid. Minimum staffing standards are one direct way that nursing homes have better staffing. More of the public dollars paid to nursing homes should go to support the staff providing the services. Staff need to have full benefits like health insurance and non-punitive sick leave. • Nursing homes need our help with payment moving forward, but also need to be held accountable in being good stewards of those public payments. • Strong investment in home- and community-based services will lessen the number of individuals relying on nursing homes for their care. • Strategies to help nursing homes of all sizes improve infection control and prevention including intensive education and the requirement of a full-time infection prevention specialist will help prevent future deaths.
01.08.2020	Effectiveness of an On-Site Medicalization Program for Nursing Homes with COVID-19 Outbreaks	Journals of Gerontology: Series A / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A coordinated on-site medicalization program (MP) in response to a sizeable COVID-19 outbreak in four nursing homes was organized, with the objectives of improving survival, offering humanistic palliative care to residents in their natural environment, and reducing hospital referrals. • 272 out of 457 (59.5%) residents and 85 out of 320 (26.5%) staff members were affected.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SOPC, survival, and referrals to hospital, occurred in 77%, 72.5%, and 29% of patients diagnosed before MP start, with respect to 97%, 83.7% and 17% of those diagnosed during the program, respectively. • This program achieved a higher survival or optimal palliative care rate, and a reduction in referrals to hospital, thus ensuring rigorous but also humanistic and gentle care to residents.
03.08.2020	Real-time digital contact tracing: Development of a system to control COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing homes and long-term care facilities	JMIR Public Health and Surveillance / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the development of a digital contact tracing system that LTC facilities can use to rapidly identify and contain asymptomatic and symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infected contacts. • Simulation results indicate that the speed and efficiency of digital contact tracing contributed to superior control performance yielding up to 52% fewer cases than conventional methods.
03.08.2020	Finding the Right Balance: An Evidence-Informed Guidance Document to Support the Re-Opening of Canadian Nursing Homes to Family Caregivers and Visitors during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Journal of the American Medical Directors Association / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing homes across Canada have cautiously started to reopen, yet there is broad criticism that emerging visitor policies are overly restrictive, inequitable and potentially harmful. • Reviews the nursing home visitor policies for Canada's ten provinces and three territories as well as international policies and reports on the topic to develop evidence-informed, data-driven and expert-reviewed guidance for the re-opening of Canadian nursing homes to family caregivers and visitors.
03.08.2020	Elderly Care in the Time of Coronavirus: Perceptions and Experiences of Care Home Staff in Pakistan	International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study accordingly explores the perceptions and experiences of staff providing direct caregiving services to the elderly residents at three care homes during the time of the coronavirus pandemic in Karachi, Pakistan. • 27 digitally-recorded, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were performed with current and former caregiving staff members. The data was analyzed through qualitative content analysis.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main theme class identified from the data was "living in anxiety and fear." The work-related decisions made by caregivers at that time were mainly influenced by their familial demands and responsibilities.
04.08.2020	Experiences of Home Health Care Workers in New York City During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: A Qualitative Analysis	JAMA Internal Medicine / Original Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative study of 33 home health care workers employed by 24 unique home care agencies across New York City. Five major themes emerged. Home health care workers (1) were on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic but felt invisible; (2) reported a heightened risk for virus transmission; (3) received varying amounts of information, supplies, and training from their home care agencies; (4) relied on nonagency alternatives for support, including information and supplies; and (5) were forced to make difficult trade-offs in their work and personal lives.
04.08.2020	Extreme Vulnerability of Home Care Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic—A Call to Action	JAMA Internal Medicine / Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commentary on above study which serves as an important call to action as the demand for home care workers continues to increase. Highlights the needs of home care workers, such as provision of PPE, funding, education and research; data collection of infection rates; introduction of legislation and protection.
05.08.2020	Testing strategies for the control of COVID-19 in nursing homes: Universal or targeted screening?	Journal of Infection / Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the 17/04/2020 to 26/06/2020, 50 nursing homes (NH) situated in the Vendée department of France tested a median number of 42 (IQR: 15-76) residents and 54 (35-73) professionals by nasopharyngeal sample and RT-PCR, totalizing 2003 residents and 2822 professionals. Overall, 25 (1.25%) residents and 25 (0.88%) professionals were positive for COVID-19, among whom 19 (76%), and 22 (88%) asymptomatic, respectively. Among the 14 NH which tested both residents and professionals to investigate around a COVID-19 positive resident, 6 (42%) NH did not found any positive case, 4 (29%) found one to two cases, and 4 (29%) identified ≥ 3 cases.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among the 4 (8%) NH which tested residents and professionals to investigate the spread of COVID-19 around a positive professional, one (25%) NH did not find any positive case, two (50%) found one to two cases, and one (25%) NH identified ≥ 3 cases. All positive cases were asymptomatic. • Among the 32 NH which performed a universal screening in absence of known COVID-19 positive case on the day of testing, two (6%) identified one positive resident. • Authors suggest that in a post-lockdown context with an estimated mean daily incidence rate of 0.59 COVID-19 cases per 100.000 population, the universal screening in NH free of known positive case seems inefficient. However, once a facility has confirmed a COVID-19 case, extensive testing should be performed for all professionals and residents, and all residents should be cared for using personal protective equipment.
<p>06.08.2020</p>	<p>Health workers perception on telemedicine in management of neuropsychiatric symptoms in long-term care facilities: Two years follow-up</p>	<p>Geriatric Nursing / Article</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this multicenter prospective study, 90 patients from ten facilities benefited from 180 sessions over two years. The primary outcome was the perception of telemedicine evaluated through semi-structured interviews at baseline and two years later. • Staff members believe that telemedicine is not a downgraded version of medicine, but they also believe that it could improve the quality of care. They expressed a very positive sense of recognition of their professional qualifications and indicated their need to be involved in change processes to ensure successful implementation and better adherence to telemedicine as a service.

Preprints (non-peer reviewed)

Publication date	Title / URL	Journal / Article type	Digest
05.08.2020	Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in care home staff and residents in English care homes: A service evaluation	MedRxiv / Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of a nurse-led Enhanced Care Home Team (ECHT) enhanced SARS-CoV-2 testing strategy in care homes in Norfolk UK. • Residents (n=518) in 44 homes and staff (n=340) in 10 care homes were tested. • Residents and staff received nose and throat swab tests (7 April to 29 June 2020). Resident test results were linked with symptoms on days 0-14 after test and mortality to 13 July 2020. • SARS-CoV-2 positivity was identified in 103 residents in 14 homes and 49 staff in seven homes. Of 103 SARS-CoV-2+ residents, just 38 had typical symptom(s) at time of test (new cough and/or fever). Amongst 54 residents who were completely asymptomatic when tested, 12 (22%) developed symptoms within 14 days.

Reports and other publications

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
30.07.2020	Written Statement: Action Plan for Care Homes	Julie Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights six key areas on which Welsh Government are focussing: infection prevention and control; personal protective equipment; general and clinical support for care homes; residents' wellbeing; social care workers' wellbeing and financial sustainability. The outcomes from this rapid review will inform the winter planning.

31.07.2020	Social care reform: what is the vision?	Nuffield Trust / Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks at the systems currently in place in Germany and Japan in terms of vision, different methods of funding, and problems encountered such as shortage of staff.
July 2020	Adult social care and COVID-19: Assessing the policy response in England so far. Our analysis of the national government policy response during the first phase of the pandemic	Health Foundation / Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a detailed description and timeline of the government's social care response. Considers the role that social care has played in the overall policy narrative. Identifies the underlying factors within the social care system, such as its structure and funding, that have shaped its ability to respond. Argues that central government support for social care came too late and that policy action on social care has been focused primarily on care homes and risks leaving out other vulnerable groups and services. Identifies priorities to help prepare for potential future waves of the virus, including greater involvement of social care in planning and decision making, improved access to regular testing and PPE, and a commitment to cover the costs of local government's COVID-19 response. Details more fundamental reforms of social care that are needed, including action to improve pay and conditions for staff, stabilising the care provider market, increasing access to publicly funded services, and providing greater protection for people against social care costs.
July 2020	Adult social care and COVID-19: Assessing the impact on social care users and staff in England so far. Our analysis on the scale of the impact of COVID-19 on social care in England during the first phase of the pandemic	Health Foundation / Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social care in England. Describes how the pandemic unfolded in the social care sector from March until June 2020, examines the factors that contributed to the scale and severity of outbreaks in care homes, and attempts to quantify the disruption to health and social care access from February until the end of April 2020.
03.08.2020	Written Statement: Further Funding for Adult Social Care Providers	Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Health and Social Services and Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announced a further injection of £22.7m to local authorities to enable them to continue to assist adult social care providers with on-going additional costs. This funding will be available immediately through to the end of September, when the situation will be reviewed again.

04.08.2020	The impact of COVID-19 on community health services	NHS Confederation and NHS Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report captures the community sector’s response during the pandemic and showcases the achievements of community providers and their staff. • It seeks to learn from community providers’ experiences of the pandemic to secure much-needed transformation for the longer term, and makes a number of recommendations for support from government and the national NHS bodies to enable this.
August 2020	Hospital discharge and preventing unnecessary hospital admissions (COVID-19)	Social Care Institute for Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This guide discusses the lessons learned from hospital discharge and avoidance during the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights challenges faced and good practice to prevent unnecessary admissions going forward. • Highlights the challenges in transfers to care homes. • Lists examples and actions that have helped discharge and reduced transmission in care homes.

Guidance

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
Updated 30.07.2020	Guidance for stepdown of infection control precautions within hospitals and discharging COVID-19 patients from hospital to home settings	Public Health England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on appropriate infection prevention and control precautions for stepdown in hospital or discharge to home or residential settings. • Updated to include changes to self-isolation policy for all patients admitted to hospital to 14 days; updated section 3 to include the provision of written instructions for ongoing isolation when discharging patients. • Section 5 gives guidance on discharge to a single occupancy room in care facility, including nursing homes and residential homes.
Updated 31.07.2020	Visiting care homes during coronavirus	Department of Health & Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This guidance is for directors of public health, care providers and others who’ll be involved in planning to enable visits to care homes. It sets out:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principles of a local approach to visiting arrangements and dynamic risk assessment; • guidance for providers establishing their visiting policy; • guidance for providers taking decisions on visiting for particular residents or groups of residents; • infection control precautions; • communicating with relatives and others about the visiting policy and visiting decisions.
Updated 31.07.2020	COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings	Public Health England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated to reflect the extension of the self-isolation period from 7 days to 10 days for staff who have COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test result from the community; 14 days isolation period for staff and patients who are admitted to hospital (section 2); inclusion of re-testing guidance in staff (section 3). • Section 8 gives guidance on resident exposures in care settings.
Updated 31.07.2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): admission and care of people in care homes	Department of Health & Social Care, Care Quality Commission, Public Health England, NHS England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This guidance is for care homes, local health protection teams, local authorities, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and registered providers of accommodation for people who need personal or nursing care. It sets out how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • admit and care for residents safely; • protect care home staff. • Updated in line with the support package for care homes and latest updated advice on testing, and infection prevention and control.
31.07.2020	Guidance on COVID-19 PCR testing in care homes and the management of COVID-19 PCR test positive residents and staff	Health Protection Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main purpose of this health protection guidance is to identify what is required to achieve the greatest potential reduction in the risk of transmission of the virus within primarily all forms of residential care home settings for the elderly, in the shortest possible time. • This guidance has been produced to assist NHS Board Health Protection teams (HPTs) and care home providers to

			manage COVID-19 PCR test positive residents and staff, especially asymptomatic test positive staff.
03.08.2020	COVID-19 - contact tracing in complex settings: health protection team guidance	Health Protection Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This guidance provides recommendations for the identification of contacts of confirmed human cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) when either the case and/or the contact is linked to a complex setting. • Includes social care settings such as care homes and day care centre for older/vulnerable people
Updated 03.08.2020	Social care workforce special payment scheme	Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme is aimed at staff within registered care homes and domiciliary care services and includes Personal Assistants (PAs). • The time period of the scheme is 15 March to 31 May 2020. • Payment is a one-off flat rate payment of £500.

Statistics

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
04.08.2020	Number of deaths in care homes notified to the Care Quality Commission, England	Office for National Statistics & Care Quality Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional counts of deaths in care homes caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) by local authority up to week ending 31 July.
04.08.2020	Notifications of deaths of residents related to COVID-19 in adult care homes: 1 March to 31 July 2020	Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data presented here are based on the Notifications of Service User Deaths received by Care Inspectorate Wales from adult care homes which relate to their residents. The location of death may be in the care home, in hospital or another location.
05.08.2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult care homes - additional data	Scottish Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly data on COVID-19 in adult care homes in Scotland, including: • Testing for COVID-19 in adult care homes in Scotland split by care homes with confirmed Covid-19 and without confirmed Covid-19, presented by NHS Health Board;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaths reported to Care Inspectorate - the number of deaths reported by adult care homes, including COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related deaths.
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Editorials and News

Publication date	Title / URL	Author(s)	Digest
29.07.2020	Covid-19: Social care was "thrown to the wolves" by government, say MPs	BMJ / News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee's report <i>Readying the NHS and social care for the covid-19 peak</i>.
29.07.2020	NHS Providers response to the Public Accounts Committee report on readying the NHS and social care for the peak of COVID-19	NHS Providers / News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy Chief Executive Saffron Cordery comments on the Public Accounts Committee's report on readying the NHS and social care for the peak of Covid-19.
30.07.2020	Covid-19: Government failed to protect social care during pandemic, say experts	BMJ / News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of the findings of the Health Foundation's briefing papers analysing the effects of the pandemic on social care users and staff in England and the policy response so far from the government.
31.07.2020	Commissioner's response to Welsh Government announcement on action for care homes	Older People's Commissioner for Wales / News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Heléna Herklots CBE, said: "The loss we have seen in our care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic has been a tragedy, and older people living in care homes in Wales need assurance that they will be kept safe and protected from Covid-19, and will be able to access the support they need to have the best possible quality of life. "I welcome the measures set out in the Deputy Minister's letter to stakeholders, which reflect many of the calls for action I made as part of my recently published Care Home Voices report and will underpin the Welsh Government's forthcoming action plan.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “As we head towards the winter, taking action across all of the areas outlined by the Deputy Minister will be crucial if we are to avoid further loss and tragedy in our care homes, which support some of our most vulnerable citizens.”
03.08.2020	<p>Minister announces extra £22.7m to help adult social care sector</p>	<p>Welsh Government / Press Release</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Social Services Minister Vaughan Gething has announced £22.7m in extra funding to help meet the additional costs adult social care providers are incurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. • The money is in addition to the £40m Welsh Government made available to local authorities in April to assist the adult social care sector.