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Dear Care Home Provider,

I am pleased to share with you findings from our inspections of care homes for older people from April 2020 to end of March 2021.

Firstly though, I and my colleagues would like to acknowledge the challenges that care homes and all registered care services have faced during the pandemic over the last year. We fully appreciate the hard work and commitment of care home services and everyone who works in them - our focus continues to be on supporting services in these very difficult times. We have seen a range of positive practice across the sector. We acknowledge the scrutiny that care homes have found themselves under from different agencies but also the benefit this can bring if we work together to support improvement.

In August 2020, we published '[The Care Inspectorate's Role, Purpose and Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#)'. That report covers some of the lessons learned from March 2020 to end July 2020, and in [my letter to you dated 8 October 2020](#), I highlighted key themes and trends that were emerging from our inspection activity.

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, we carried out 626 older people's care home inspections. Some of these inspections were undertaken with inspectors from Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

In June 2020, we augmented our quality framework by creating Key Question 7 with associated quality indicators to enable us to inspect how services were operating in response to the pandemic. This continues to reflect our current inspection focus on service performance in relation to Covid-19 including people's health and wellbeing, infection prevention and control, PPE, and staffing.

Our inspections have focused on Key Question 7. We have also inspected against quality indicators from our wider framework when the intelligence has indicated this was required.

Key Question 7: How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The quality indicators for Key Question 7 are:

- 7.1 People's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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- 7.2 Infection control practices support a safe environment for both people experiencing care and staff.
- 7.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of people experiencing care.

Our inspection findings highlight areas of positive practice, as well as identifying areas for improvement.

Areas of positive practice and improvements included:

- staff providing kind and compassionate care to people during a challenging time
- use of technology to help people who are experiencing care to stay in contact with those important to them
- good supplies of PPE in care services and management
- access to education sessions that not only looked at infection prevention and control and PPE, the wider impact of Covid-19 on individual health and wellbeing

Through our inspections, we identified three common themes for improvement that saw the highest number of requirements being issued.

1. People's health and wellbeing

- Meeting residents' needs during the pandemic including addressing the direct effects of Covid-19 infection, the effects of isolation on residents and availability of staff in sufficient numbers and with appropriate skills to meet identified care needs.
- Active care planning: care plans did not always contain information that would support staff to meet people's health and wellbeing needs, undertake anticipatory care planning or care for people differently during the pandemic.
- Supporting physical distancing, self-isolation and people who present with stress or distress.

2. Infection prevention and control practices

- The critical role of infection prevention and control practice in keeping people safe. This covered a range of areas, from cleaning products to waste management, PPE, and staff knowledge.
- Environmental cleanliness including housekeeping staff numbers and practice, cleaning of soft furnishings and equipment, maintenance of equipment including mattresses.
- Laundry practice and organisation of the laundry area.

3. Staffing arrangements:

- Management and leadership linked to implementation of quality assurance systems, and governance arrangements to reduce risk and ensure implementation of good practice.
- Staffing including staffing levels, deployment, skill mix, and clarity around roles and responsibilities.

Open with Care

Scottish Government's Open with Care guidance supports homes to enable people to reconnect with family and friend and gives services advice on how to do this safely. The majority of homes are supporting indoor visiting and enabling people to reconnect with people important to them. However, it is essential that all homes implement the guidance fully to ensure that the experience for people when visiting is enhanced. We will continue to work with homes to achieve this alongside local oversight groups.

Although lockdown restrictions continue to be relaxed, there is no room for complacency; Covid-19 has not gone away, and robust practice must be maintained to reduce the risk of transmission.

To support you, we will continue to:

- provide information and guidance through our Provider Updates, website and social media
- provide support and advice through our contact centre and contact with inspectors to help you apply guidance
- work with our partners including the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, Health Protection Scotland, and HSCP and health boards to support care home services
- make our winter webinars on infection prevention and control and other related topics available [here](#) on The Hub
- promote our [good practice compendium](#) and the [ARHAI compendium](#), both of which are regularly updated
- develop our improvement plan for how we support services to address the areas highlighted above and embed learning into practice
- strengthen our relationship managers' roles with providers to share intelligence and support improvement.

Thank you for all that you and your staff teams have been doing throughout the pandemic to support and protect all those living and working in your care home. We see the challenges services face and how hard you have been working. We will continue doing all we can to support you to deliver high-quality care.

Yours faithfully



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