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Ref JD/af 01

27<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council  
Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee.  
Municipal Buildings  
Church Road  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS18 1LD

Dear Councillor Cunningham

As discussed with Gary Woods, Scrutiny Officer on this occasion the Trust is unable to attend Health Select Committee as planned. Please accept our apologies, in lieu of our attendance please see below our response to the queries raised.

**What guidance did the Trust receive regarding discharge to care homes during the escalating Covid-19 outbreak in the UK (including how and when this was disseminated)? Did this change over time?**

Following the NHS declaration of a Level 4 National Incident on 30 January, the response to COVID-19 has been co-ordinated at a national level:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/urgent-next-steps-on-nhs-response-to-covid-19-letter-simon-stevens.pdf>

During the Level 4 national incident, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has met or exceeded national guidance in its response to COVID-19:

1. National COVID-19 guidance published on 19 March 2020 setting out hospital discharge requirements for medically fit patients (patients no longer requiring hospital care) is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-hospital-discharge-service-requirements>
2. Guidance implementing a new requirement to test patients being discharged from NHS hospitals to a care home was published on 16 April 2020 and is available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/04/C0324-New-requirement-to-test-patients-being-discharged-from-hospital-to-a-care-home.pdf>

In addition to the national guidance described above, from 12 March 2020 South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust tested all admitted patients for COVID-19 who met the national case definition (list of symptoms). From 6 April 2020, the Trust expanded this testing to include all inpatients upon their arrival at hospital (irrespective of the case definition).

Separately, the Trust has provided a range of mutual aid to care homes including COVID-19 testing, supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and community nursing support.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hospital-discharge-service-guidance>

### **What was the process around hospital discharge, and how was this communicated between key partners (i.e. care homes, Local Authority)?**

A command centre was established with our key local authorities to ensure national guidance was implemented. In addition a daily operational meeting involving social workers, hospital discharge teams were established to discuss individual patient requirements prior to discharge for any patient requiring a care package/nursing or care home placement. We work in close collaboration with other partners including North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and their integrated discharge team.

### **What factors were put in place to keep people safe, and how did key partners work together to address concerns?**

The Trust identified a lead Director to co-ordinate and ensure discharge processes were followed. The system undertook twice weekly escalation calls with lead Directors from key partners to deal with any concerns as they arose.

Separately, the Trust has provided a range of mutual aid to care homes including COVID-19 testing, supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and community nursing support.

### **What can be learned ahead of an anticipated second Covid-19 surge?**

National emergency guidance has evolved throughout the pandemic and as a trust our clinicians have we have met or exceeded this at every stage.

There has undoubtedly been learning along the way which national virologists and epidemiologists have applied at each point in the nation's response.

National virologists and epidemiologists have found out more and more about this new virus and that learning has been applied through evolving guidance.

Examining where the nation is now, and where it was in the early stages of the pandemic, there is range of learning that has been applied ahead of this winter and any potential second surge. The set of symptoms used in making a decision whether an individual may have the virus has evolved, and factors that can affect a person's risk - such as age and where you live - are just a number of examples of where the nation has applied new learning as understanding of the virus has evolved.



**South Tees Hospitals**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Further national guidance published on 21 August 2020 setting out the requirements for Hospital Discharge Service: Policy and Operating Model, which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hospital-discharge-service-guidance>

The system has already met to ensure this additional guidance is enacted from 1 September 2020.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Dobson

**Director of Transformation & Strategic Partnerships**