

National Care Group COVID 19 Response

August 2020

1. Purpose of Paper

To give an overview of and provide assurance on, the key elements of the National Care Group (NCG) COVID 19 response.

Additionally, this paper may be used to compliment information provided as part of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Emergency Support Framework process and to give additional evidence of our approach to all other interested parties including the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

2. Overview.

The primary aim of the NCG COVID 19 Response has been to protect the health and well-being of the individuals it supports and staff. In seeking to achieve this aim, NCG has sought to follow all national and local guidance produced, to work collaboratively with all stakeholders (i.e. individuals it supports, families and statutory agencies) and to be transparent in its approach.

It is a testament to the skill, professionalism, determination, and patience of so many, supported by the NCG COVID 19 Response measures summarised in this paper, that the rates of infection amongst the individuals it supports is extremely low.

Now is not the time to be complacent and the key elements of NCG COVID 19 Response will continue in place until such time as it is considered appropriate to implement change. Changes when implemented, will be based on an assessment of risk determined locally.

The NCG COVID 19 Response plan in subject to constant review and will be adjusted accordingly in preparation of any second wave of the pandemic.

All decisions taken during the pandemic have been taken in the context of the ethical framework for adult social care published on 19 March and subsequently circulated across NCG.

3. COVID 19 Management Command

NCG Board

The NCG Board meets monthly and has received updates on all actions related to COVID 19.

In addition, the NCG Board has a Risk and Governance Committee which meets quarterly to review all governance matters including those relating to COVID 19. This Committee is chaired by a Non-Executive Director.

National Management Command

NCG implemented preliminary national management command arrangements on 6 March 2020 in response to early indications that there was likely to be a sustained COVID transmission in the UK.

These arrangements were intended to effectively manage any internal or external stresses on the organisation arising as a result of the pandemic and to ensure that sufficient levels of provider support and oversight were in place to mitigate the anticipated risk.

The primary responsibilities of national management command are to ensure appropriate assurance processes are in place, that monitoring of services is robust and risk management is effective.

Following an assessment of the increasing risk preliminary national management command arrangements were subsequently formalised as follows:

- **Coronavirus Daily Executive Team**

Led by the NCG Chief Executive and involving all members of the Executive Team and Coronavirus Risk Committee Lead (see below) these meetings have been held daily since 17 March 2020.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure senior level oversight and leadership is in place to manage and respond to all issues relating to COVID 19. The meetings review all internal and external developments and ensure that all actions required are either planned and/or implemented in a timely and effective manner.

- **Coronavirus Risk Committee**

Led by a member of the NCG Senior Operational Team and attended by the Executive Team and all members of the NCG Senior Operational Leadership Team these meetings have been held weekly since 7 March 2020.

The Committee is responsible for planning, implementing, and reporting on actions locally to ensure that all constituent registered bodies of NCG continue to operate safely and effectively.

Oversight of and assurance that actions required have been completed is given by a detailed *Coronavirus Regional Tracker* which is updated weekly.

In order to assure the Board that appropriate governance arrangements have been implemented the Chair of the Board Risk and Governance Committee has participated in the Coronavirus Risk Committee.

Local Management Command

Services across NCG are managed within a regional management structure headed up by a Regional Operations Manager/Principal (Regent College). Each Regional Operations Manager/Principal is responsible for implementing appropriate local command arrangements that will enable them to discharge responsibilities set by the National Management Command or arising from local circumstances. This includes ensuring knowledge and contact with as appropriate local Resilience Forums.

Local management command systems will also ensure that appropriate staffing arrangements are in place and that supported individuals continue to be protected from abuse.

Monthly assurance reports are requested by the NCG Quality Director, for review and onward communication to National Management Command as appropriate.

A range of documents and advice has been developed and issued to all services. A summary/index of all guidance/documentation is regularly updated and is available to all Managers electronically.

National and Local Management On Call Systems

National On call rotas were amended and extended to ensure Executive Director available at all times to support local services should emergency of other support be required.

4. NCG COVID 19 Policy and Business Continuity Plans

NCG COVID 19 Policy

NCG issued a corporate NCG COVID 19 Policy on 18 March 2020. The policy was reviewed on 11 May 2020.

This policy is available to all staff via the NCG Intranet (see below)

NCG COVID 19 Business Continuity Plan

NCG issued a specific Coronavirus Business Continuity Plan on 18 March 2020.

The Business Continuity Plan is available to all staff via the NCG Intranet (see below).

Local COVID 19 Business Continuity Plan

All Operational Regions and Regent College have developed and issues their own Local COVID 19 Business Continuity Plans.

Confirmation has been given that these have been shared with all staff teams.

5. Communication

Overview

NCG has made every effort to ensure that it continues to communicate effectively and widely with all stakeholders.

A number of new and existing channels have been used and developed since March to support communication of the NCG COVID 19 Response. Guidance to staff on how to use ZOOM was circulated in March.

NCG Intranet

A dedicated COVID 19 page has been added to the NCG intranet. This page is updated regularly and is dedicated to providing advice and relevant materials to staff, the individuals we support and families to help reduce the risks of developing symptoms related to the Coronavirus and to keep all updated on how NCG is managing the increased threat the virus poses.

The page covers messages to all, messages to staff, messages to individuals we support and families (easy read) and links to external guidance.

Coronavirus Management Updates

A regular Coronavirus Management Update email has been circulated widely (initially daily) to all relevant Managers. The update provides useful briefing and information for managers often based on national and local guidance and good practice received.

A record of the content of these updates is available on request.

Communication With Stakeholders

The NCG Chief Executive has written on a regular basis to individuals we support, their families and staff on a regular basis. Letters for individuals have been provided in easy read as appropriate.

Communication With Staff

Communication with staff has included guidance and advice including the use of PPE.

In addition, videos for general use have been produced as updates (Chief Executive), advice on PPE (Regional Operations Manager) and sharing experiences (service level).

COVID – 19 featured heavily in the last edition (May) of the internal staff newsletter and a specific #QualityMatters (internal quality briefing) was also produced.

6. Risk Assessment and Management

NCG Approach

Key to managing through the pandemic has been a robust approach to risk management.

NCG has been keen to ensure that it is able to protect the individuals it supports and its staff at all times whilst at the same time being responsive to the need to ensure that individuals where possible, remain connected with their communities and their families.

Operational Framework

NCG has created an operational risk management framework within which decisions can be taken locally by people best placed to assess the risks that affect individuals.

In summary the following key documents have been produced:

- Template for risk assessment
- Service risk and contingency analysis tool
- Checklist of actions to undertake for C-19 before sustained transmission
- Shift C-19 Risk Assessment: risk assessment every shift (including consideration of symptoms and temperatures for staff and individuals).
- Covid-19 Risk Assessment for Staff to identify whether they are at higher risk (based on Welsh Government version)

7. PPE

Procurement and Supply

PPE procurement has been managed centrally by NCG to source and supply PPE throughout the pandemic. This procurement has supported local procurement and supply and has ensured that PPE has been available at all times for staff.

Procurement has been supported by a national PPE tracker established to track local and national supplies and to ensure that orders are placed appropriately.

Guidance and Support to Staff

NCG has followed all guidance provided on the requirement and use of PPE. Infection Control training has for example, has been prioritised with 96% of staff having completed it as at 6 July 2020.

Guidance has included flow charts and videos on use and further communication to staff to avoid any risk of PPE anxiety complacency and fatigue.

Office Closures

In line with government guidance, where staff are able to work from home this has been encouraged and supported. Some local offices have functioned throughout the pandemic but access to these has been limited to essential workers only.

Plans have been developed to support the opening of offices in line with government guidance and when appropriate in light of any new local lockdown arrangements.

8. Provider Oversight

Overview

NCG is confident and can evidence that robust provider oversight has been maintained through the pandemic.

Whilst the restrictions imposed has meant normal access to services being limited to essential visitors only, NCG has, as illustrated in this paper, adapted internal quality and operational management processes accordingly and appropriately and intelligently.

Internal Audit

Under the direction of the NCG Quality Director, the Quality Team has conducted virtual service audits to give assurance that services are compliant and/or any issues arising from the pandemic and not already identified can be addressed.

Closed Cultures

NCG notes the potential risk identified by CQC arising from closed cultures. The issue remains a high priority for the organisation and has formed the subject of a dedicated *#qualitymatters* briefing published in July.

In addition, procedures to begin to relax restrictions on visits by NCG support teams have been developed and implemented.

9. Summary

NCG responded quickly and effectively to the initial challenges posed by the pandemic and can evidence a robust to it at all levels across the organisation.

Systems, approaches, documentation, and communication methods have all been structured to support individuals and staff locally so that the risk and impact of the pandemic can be managed accordingly.

Nothing could however have been achieved without the cooperation and determination of the individuals we support, their families and our staff.