

Shropshire Health & Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25 January 2021

Public Questions from Diane Peacock

Q1. Will the committee please investigate further why the percentages of deaths in care homes in Shropshire from mid-September continued to be higher than CQC comparator areas below for weeks 38-53, while percentages of Shropshire Covid-19 deaths in hospital were lower?¹ This could be a critical if care homes are to be protected from further surges in cases.

Thank you for your enquiry. We do appreciate the concern in regards to the number of deaths in care homes. We would like to offer more information about the preventative measures we have supported as a Council and about the data and some of the contributing factors.

Shropshire has a very high number of care homes in the county, with 3500 beds registered with CQC. There are 117 care homes, the highest number for a rural locality in the West midland region. We have further analysed the local data below for information.

Reported hospital deaths in the period weeks 38 -53 show that 79 deaths were registered. Of these 79 deaths we are not able to identify which cases were in care homes before admission to hospital, as this data is not collated.

This data does not explicitly identify care home residents who were transferred to hospital and sadly died in hospital. Nor does it explicitly identify the number of residents in care homes who were sadly nearing the end of their lives. Our care homes take a respectful approach to end of life and where residents express a wish to die at home this wish is respected.

We can't analyse in this level of detail in other areas of the country so can't comment on death rates in other counties.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathsduecovid19bylocalareaanddeprivation> -

Table 1 breaks down the number of deaths and age-standardised rates for people by local authorities for the year. By looking at rates due to COVID, the 10-month total shows: is 323 deaths for a rate of 93.2. A higher rate would indicate that more deaths are occurring in younger people.

We have picked out those areas highlighted by Dr Peacock for comparison:

Table 1

	10-month period March - December				Monthly Rate			
	Deaths	Rate	Lower CI	Upper CI	September	October	November	December
Cheshire East	632	159.2	146.8	171.7		35.4 (19.3 – 59.4)	110.2 (79.7 – 148.5)	180.7 (141.6 – 227.3)
Cheshire West and Cheshire	543	166.9	152.8	180.9		40.2 (21.2 – 69)	214.6 (166.9 – 271.7)	257.0 (205.2 – 317.9)
Cornwall	228	38.3	33.3	43.3			23 (12.6 – 38.6)	31 (18.6 -48.4)
Wiltshire	446	91.4	82.9	99.9			88.2 (63.5 – 119.2)	102.2 (76-134.4)
Northumberland	448	134.5	122.0	147.0		148 (109.6 – 195.4)	181.2 (137.8 – 233.8)	209.6 (163.6 – 264.5)
SHROPSHIRE	323	93.2	83.0	103.4		34.6 (17.7 – 60.8)	115.2 (81.7 – 157.8)	111.2 (79 – 152.1)
WEST MIDLANDS	8,183	167.5	163.8	171.1	15.1 (11.8-19.1)	54.7 (48.2-61.2)	212.6 (199.5 – 225.6)	285.6 (270.7 – 300.5)
ENGLAND	69,041	149.8	148.7	150.9	13 (12.0 – 14.1)	64.1 (61.9 – 66.4)	191.3 (187.2 – 195.3)	233.6 (229.2 – 238)

Shropshire has a lower rate than most areas shown which suggests Shropshire is doing well comparatively with only Cornwall significantly lower – and Cornwall was an area which in the past had far fewer COVID cases than most other counties.

We have, sadly, had a number of outbreaks in care homes which specialise in the care of individuals who have dementia. In some cases, the nature of the condition of residents means that it is more complex to control infection, particularly in individuals who wander.

It is important to recognise that Shropshire has a proportionally high number of care homes and demographically our county has a high proportion of individuals who are older than 65 years.

In addition, there are a large number of care homes in Shropshire who specialise in the care of frail individuals including those with dementia, this group of people are unfortunately vulnerable.

The Adult Social Care and Infection Control teams monitor Covid outbreaks daily in care homes. They also have robust mechanisms in place to support the providers of care in the county.

In summary, the factors that could influence the level of morbidity is:

- Shropshire has a higher percentage of population that is older in comparison with other areas, and thus likely a higher care home population
- Currently, the new variant of the Covid virus is highly transmissible. When it is transmitted into care homes, particularly those with older people it has spread quickly despite control measures being in place
- Comparing the proportion of care home to hospital deaths in each of the areas the proportions of deaths are similar. This indicates that the virus had a similar impact on morbidity across all 6 areas. It should be noted that Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester have a lower elderly proportion of the population.

Q2. How many of Shropshire's 120 homes have had any gaps in their serial Covid-19 testing timetable (i.e. weekly for staff and monthly for residents) since the beginning of September 2020?

There are currently 117 care homes operating in Shropshire. All homes have received significant support both practically and financially in order to implement the governments testing regime throughout the pandemic. Currently care homes are required to do PCR test on a weekly basis and recommended to do an additional 2 lateral flow tests every week for every member of staff. Care homes are required to upload their data for testing onto national portal systems rather than local ones and the council do not collate the data for the thousands of tests done every week. Positive tests are reported though to Public Health and any issues with outbreaks will trigger public health support and homes in outbreak situations report testing though the incident management team that works with every home in an outbreak situation.

The Council have been giving homes significant levels of support advice and guidance to ensure that all of this work can be done expediently and safely in every home. We have also worked to support homes where there have been issues with testing supplies, training for staff to be competent at testing, support from professional infection control staff, access to lateral flow testing centres, financial support through the distribution and monitoring of grant funding and other support where outbreaks occur across social care and public health teams

Q3. How many of Shropshire's 120 care homes have, as of today (19.01.21), received the vaccination?

What additional safeguards will be put in place if some staff or residents decline the vaccination?

100 % of Shropshire care homes Have been supported by their GPs to access vaccinations within the home - as of the 18th of February 2021 92% of care home residents have received their vaccinations. The remaining 8% have either refused vaccinations or are too unwell to have them at this time and follow up visits from GP's are planned, As well as visits for second doses.

Where individuals refuse vaccinations the reasons for this are collated and individuals are supported to make informed decisions through sharing information where appropriate to dispel myths about vaccine safety and shared data about vaccine positive outcomes.

At this time 78% of all employed staff have been vaccinated. The care home sector is also receiving weekly communications about access to vaccines frequently asked questions about vaccines, and other general information to ensure that everybody can be as well informed as possible.,

Q4. How many patients with a positive test for Covid-19 have been admitted to and/or discharged from hospital into any of Shropshire's care homes since the beginning of September 2020?

In regards discharge, hospital patients who are positive and have completed their acute period of care but require ongoing support in a care home setting are discharged into a designated setting as set out in government guidance. Therefore, we can be assured that no one with a positive test has been discharged from hospital into an ordinary care home setting since this time.

Care homes are picking up infections quickly through regular testing. However, the time taken for the infection to develop means that it is not possible to define exactly the day on which a care resident contracts the virus. We can only be sure of the day that the swab is taken. Patients who test positive for Covid can test positive 14 days after exposure.

In regards to admission, Care home residents with a positive test are transferred to hospital when they require acute hospital treatment. This is done using Covid secure procedures. However, it is also possible that residents with a negative test are incubating Covid and are transferred to hospital for another reason. This infection may then be picked up on admission. The numbers of care residents who tested positive and were admitted to hospital is not a record that is specifically held by Shropshire Council. This data may be available from the health sector SaTH and Agnes Jones and Robert Hunt.

Q5. The Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund⁴ (May and July 2020) was allocated on a per-bed basis via local authorities to operators (care providers). Its six measures were intended to reduce infection transmission between and within care homes. In the interests of transparency is the committee able to provide a breakdown of what proportion of the fund has been used to support each of the six broad infection control measures in Shropshire care homes?

The following table contains all of the information we are able to share on this – it is in the public domain on the DHSC website [Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and also on our own website [Strategies, policies and procedures | Shropshire Council](#)

Local authority	First tranche payment allocated to each local authority (£)	First tranche payment dispensed by each local authority (£)	Number of care home providers who have received funding	Number of domiciliary care providers who have received funding	Number of other providers who have received funding	Number of providers who have used funding for measures to isolate residents within their own care homes	Additional information	Number of providers who have used funding for paying staff full wages while isolating following a positive test	Number of providers who have used funding on other measures	Proportion of LA allocation spent on measures to isolate residents within their own care homes	Proportion of LA allocation spent on actions to restrict staff movement within care homes	Proportion of LA allocation spent on paying staff full wages while isolating following a positive test	Proportion of LA allocation spent on other measures
Shropshire	2,300,790	2,190,193	108	83	0	56	54	53	50	24%	23%	24%	29%