

## **CABINET MEMBER REASSURANCE THAT COUNCIL IS WORKING HARD TO LOOK AFTER VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

Pembrokeshire County Council is doing everything possible to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the county's most vulnerable people in the current crisis.

That's the message from Cllr Tessa Hodgson, Cabinet Member for Social Services.

"During this difficult and challenging time we are doing all we can to look after our most vulnerable individuals, both in partnership with and alongside our partners in residential care homes, domiciliary care, the health sector and public health," said Cllr Hodgson.

"Our Provider Hub – a team pulled together to support the social care sector in managing the challenges associated with Covid-19 – is maintaining regular communication with the sector as well as providing ongoing guidance, support and mitigating action.

"We've had some excellent feedback from several care settings, including the following comments:

*'Please extend our sincere thanks to all those in the team who have kept in contact and offered us support since last November and particularly during the last month.'*

*"We are really thankful we are not having to go through this alone and the support and genuine empathy offered has been really appreciated'."*

Support from the Provider Hub includes taking measures to protect individuals and staff in care settings to reduce the risk of infection, including monitoring and replenishing the levels of PPE (personal protective equipment).

“We recognise the supply pressures that care providers are experiencing during these extraordinary times and have supplied additional PPE as required,” explained Jonathan Griffiths, Director of Social Services.

“We have a good supply with regular deliveries from the Welsh Government supply arrangements, and we provide additional PPE weekly wherever requested.”

He said that as well as proactively offering PPE, care settings are aware that the Council has supplies and that they can approach them for top up as required.

“So far we have supplied more than 460,000 items of PPE to providers across Pembrokeshire,” the Director added.

“There are no shortages that we are aware of. If any places are running short, we deliver additional supplies immediately.

“Feedback has been excellent and comments received include the following: *‘Our gloves arrived today and I wanted to say we really appreciate everything you are doing.’*”

Other help given by the Provider Hub includes enhanced support where there is a confirmed incident or outbreak in a care setting.

This can take the form of implementing infection control measures in partnership with colleagues from the health sector; deploying deep cleansing teams, financial and logistical assistance, and emotional support for staff including therapy counselling. If required, additional infrastructure is also provided (temporary buildings, catering) to support care staff welfare – e.g. external rest facilities where care staff can take a break.

The mental health and wellbeing of all individuals in care settings is extremely important, said Jonathan.

“We know that staff have been fantastic and have really gone the extra mile to help individuals speak to their relatives via What’s App or Facetime if possible,” he said. “We have also provided support to access IT to help residents and their families communicate with each other wherever needed.”

Other work taking place by the Hub includes arrangements for Covid-19 testing referrals for individuals receiving care and staff, additional payments to providers to assist with the extra costs associated with delivering a service in the current environment, and condensed, specific guidance for care setting managers.

“It’s a trying time for everyone, and we’d like to reassure everyone that we and our partners are working together to ensure our services continue to be delivered safely and effectively,” said Jonathan.

“We are doing everything we can together with providers to minimise the risk of transmission of Covid-19 throughout care settings for the health and wellbeing of our residents and staff.”