

East Sussex Care Homes Wellbeing Project - Relatives and Carers

Zoom Webinar held on Tuesday 23 March 2021 from 3:00 to
4:00 pm (Part 1)

‘What could and should health and care organisations be doing to support relatives and carers?’

Background

- Sussex wide collaboration between Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT), Carers Support Organisations and Healthwatch.
- Part of the Sussex Care Home Wellbeing Project led by Dr Padma Dalby.
- The project running to the end of March to support Care Home Communities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Working with staff but are concerned with the wellbeing of the whole community - staff, residents and their families.

In attendance

- Isobel Warren, East Sussex County Council, Adult Social Care (ASC)
- Rob Tolfree, Public Health East Sussex (and on behalf of Public Health Brighton and Hove).
- Mike Derrick, Chair Brighton and Hove and East Sussex Residential care Home Association.

Event Facilitator - Elizabeth Mackie Healthwatch East Sussex

Care Homes Wellbeing Project Team

- Dr Padma Dalby Consultant Clinical Psychologist
- Deborah Becker Care Homes Wellbeing Project

1 Introduction to the Webinar

Elizabeth Mackie opened the webinar and welcomed attendees, noting that the webinar would be followed by a closed session for family and carers to take part in a confidential discussion. Elizabeth stated that this was the third and final webinar of the programme in collaboration with carer organisations, Sussex Partnership Trust, Sussex NHS Trust, and Healthwatch. Elizabeth explained that today's webinar was to get an understanding of how it has been for family carers since revisiting reopened on 8th March.

Elizabeth noted that it was a year since going into lockdown and invited attendees to take part in a minute's reflection.

2 Opening poll

Elizabeth invited carers to take part in an anonymous poll and the results were as follows:

- Have you visited your relative in a care setting since 8th March?

Yes: 50%

No: 14%

- Do you consider yourself to be an essential care giver?

Yes: 43%

No: 57%

- Do you have regular visits booked?

Yes: 50%

No: 50%

3 Family carers share experiences of visiting their relative since 'opening up'.

Lesley Meech shared her recent experiences, noting that there was a delay in visiting her mother due to a Covid-19 outbreak in her care home. She commented on the difficulty in dealing with Public Health England regarding the 28 days required before being able to visit due to the outbreak and that they were unable to explain why care homes require a longer period than other settings. She noted that after various negotiations, she was able to visit her Mum on Mother's Day, but that the experience was particularly disappointing as her mum had to have nordazepam and was basically unconscious throughout the visit. She noted that she has since had 2 better visits where her Mum has registered her, but that she had also commented, 'I thought you had run away,' which highlighted that she was aware of the gap in visits.

Lesley explained that the care home has allowed for her to visit for 30 minutes twice a week as her Mum becomes distressed at longer visits, and that she felt the care home had recognised her individual needs. She noted that her Mum's condition has deteriorated and stated that they need to ensure visits can continue in the event of further lockdowns. She stated that the care home has been clear on how carers need to follow the processes, lateral flow tests are provided and that she receives phone notifications when she can go in.

4 60-Second Spotlight Challenge

Michael Derrick from Brighton & Hove and East Sussex Residential Care Home Association noted the difficulties of the past year and he acknowledged the patience and understanding shown by most relatives. He remembered those who had been lost and that he hoped that this year would lead them back to something closer to normal for everyone.

Jo Egan, Director of Services at Care for the Carers, reflected on what the project had achieved and that it had allowed carers to be heard. She noted that carers with relatives or friends in care homes were now seeing that carer organisations are also for them, and that they were able to share their loss and challenges. She hoped that carers were aware of the support available to them, and this would be an ongoing dialogue and connection.

Dr Padma Dalby, Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Sussex Partnership NHS Trust, remarked that it had been a privilege to work with Healthwatch and carer organisations to meet so many carers and thanked everyone for being so open in sharing their experiences. She explained that they often consider the triangle of care with the person receiving care, their

carer and the professional services supporting those people, and that the webinars had helped to cement the importance of these relationships and keeping the channels of communication open. She stated that the webinars had helped demonstrate the support available to carers and, going forward, she would ensure that carers' voices continue to be heard.

Rob Tolfree, Public Health Consultant at East Sussex County Council, provided an overview on what they had done, noting that they have primarily focused on prevention, including access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training, as well as providing support to care homes in the event of an outbreak. He stated that they had provided over 2 million items of PPE and, in the second wave, they supported care homes with staffing, meals and cleaning. They have also provided information to care homes regarding policy announcements, guidance, and have escalated issues when guidance has not worked. He stated that they have been transparent with their concerns around Covid and he felt the restrictions they put in place have helped save lives.

On what they could have done differently, he recognised that their announcement on 22nd December regarding care home visits was very late and that this should have been made earlier. Looking at their pledges, he stated that they will support family carers in the future, and they will continue to support care homes through the next stages of the pandemic. He added that they are also making efforts to maximise vaccine uptake and promote it amongst care homes and carers.

Elizabeth Mackie noted the earlier comment made by Lesley Meech regarding the difficulties she had in dealing with Public Health England regarding the 28-day rule with outbreaks in care homes. Rob Tolfree responded that this was a national policy around outbreaks, and while he was unaware of any discrepancies between care homes and other settings, he thought it would be based on how transmissible Covid is in care homes. Rob confirmed that he meets with a PHE consultant who oversees East Sussex every week and that he would ask for clarification on this.

Deborah Becker, Occupational Therapist at Sussex Partnership NHS Trust, commented on how the webinars had allowed them to hear the experiences of carers and those in care homes during the pandemic and it had helped them gain an understanding of the guidance around visiting. She noted that this information had helped shape the topics they have spoken to care home staff about, including the benefits of and how to set up a residents' carers group. She thanked attendees for their time, openness and honesty, and reassured

them that their experiences would continue to inform them as they enter into the recovery phase of the pandemic.

Michelle Kay from Brighton & Hove Healthwatch noted how the conversations had highlighted that carers felt they were not part of the decisions being made around access to care homes. She noted the need for carers to be heard given their knowledge on their loved ones and their needs, and she noted that they have reflected on feedback and put this to MPs and councillors.

Pre webinar Poll

Elizabeth Mackie noted that a poll was held prior to the webinar and was shared with around 100 people from the distribution list. The poll shows that:

78.5% of respondents had visited a relative in a care setting since 8th March.

53.85% considered themselves as essential care givers.

50% have regular visits booked in.

76.9% said they felt they had timely and open communications with the care home.

100% said that the care home clearly explained their screening.

61.54% said that they felt the care home had a clear plan in place that meets everyone's needs; and

53.85% said they felt their local health and care systems were actively enabling and supporting visits, and this is an area they will be working on going forward.

5 Q&A

Elizabeth Mackie confirmed with attendees there were no additional questions, thanked everyone for their contributions and ended the open session.

Next steps

The notes from this the final webinar will be circulated together with an overarching summary of conclusions and actions from all six webinars.

There will also be a resource pack available for family carers/relatives to share containing all the helpful suggestions shared across the project and links to ongoing support.

Healthwatch in Sussex wishes to thank all the family carers and relatives for their contributions across all the webinars and looks forward to reconnecting in July 2021 to hear the progress made with visiting loved ones in care homes/settings.