

21 October 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Designated pathways for Covid-positive patients being discharged from hospital into care homes

Thank you to everyone across the NHS, local government and the care and voluntary sectors for the huge effort to keep as many people safe and well and protected from Covid-19 over the last 7 months.

During the pandemic, we have all learned and adapted our practice and put new arrangements in place, at speed, when and where required. During the first wave, North Yorkshire County Council, City of York Council and the three North Yorkshire and York Clinical Commissioning Groups commissioned additional beds from the independent sector care homes to provide safer discharge pathways for people coming out of hospital with a positive Covid diagnosis.

The [Adult Social Care Winter Plan](#) published on 18th September 2020, sets out the plan for the next phase of the Covid-19 response and how we will achieve this. In doing all we can to protect people from Covid-19, the plan includes a commitment to deliver a designation scheme with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) of premises for people leaving hospital who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are transferring to a care home.

What is the new requirement?

The new national requirements are the following:

- Anyone with a Covid-19 positive test result being discharged into, or back into a registered care home setting (which may include supported living) must be discharged into an appropriate designated setting that enables effective isolating and/or cohorting. This approved setting has the policies, procedures, equipment and training in place to maintain infection prevention and control and support the care needs of residents.

- Complex discharges to supported living/extra care where a person is Covid-19 positive must be risk assessed to ensure the person can be supported safely without putting others living in the supported living environment at risk. If the person cannot be supported to return home safely then a discharge to a designated setting must be considered. All discharges into a designated setting must be for the remainder of the required isolation period.
- All agreed designated accommodation would need to be inspected by CQC to meet the latest CQC [infection prevention control standards](#).
- The local authority will need to agree with the designated settings providers that they have this status for the purpose of hospital discharges in managing Covid-19 positive people.
- No discharges are to be made to, or back into, a registered care home (or supported living) setting with a Covid-19 test result outstanding, or without having been tested within the 48 hours preceding the discharge. Where the test result is not available after 48 hours a risk assessment must take place to review discharge arrangements.
- Discharges into a care home must have a reported Covid test result and this must be shared with the care home prior to the person being discharged from hospital.
- Any requests for discharges into care settings that do not meet the criteria detailed above should be refused.

The commitment builds on existing [guidance on admission to care homes](#) published on 2nd April 2020 (updated 16th September) that already includes a requirement, in line with the [Hospital discharge service guidance](#).

Residents who contract Covid-19 within the care home setting should be treated and managed in line with the [Admission of Residents in a Care Home during COVID-19 policy](#). This guidance still requires all patients discharged from hospital, even with a negative test, to be isolated safely for 14 days to ensure any developing infections are managed appropriately.

People will return to their usual care arrangements at the end of the isolation period as long as they are presenting as well. There is no need for a negative test; it is common for people to continue to test positive when they are no longer infective due to viral shedding. The current guidance is that residents of care homes should not be retested for 90 days following a positive test. It is also common for people to continue to cough for a number of weeks. This should not prevent transfer to the person's usual home as long as they are otherwise well.

Which people will this affect?

The designation scheme is intended for people who have tested positive for Covid-19, or whose Covid-19 status is unclear and who are being admitted to a care home. This applies to care homes who provide accommodation for people who need personal or nursing care. This includes registered residential care and nursing homes for older people, people with dementia, and people with learning disabilities, mental health and/or other disabilities and older people, as well as supported living schemes.

Anyone with a Covid-19 positive test result, discharged into or back into a registered care home setting should only be discharged into an approved designated setting and cared for there, for the remainder of the required isolation period.

The designation scheme **does not apply** to the following cohorts:

- People who have contracted Covid-19 within the care home setting – there is no requirement to transfer Covid-19 positive residents from a care home into designated accommodation, as long as self-isolation and care is being maintained.
- People using emergency departments, who have not been admitted to hospital, do not need to be transferred into designated accommodation.
- People living in their own home, including sheltered and extra care housing or living in Supported Living where they can be discharged safely do not need to be transferred from hospital into designated accommodation

People returning back to their care home where they are usually resident so long as that care home is assured as designated accommodation. We have agreed to use the System Leadership Executive Silver Command, which meets weekly, to oversee the operationalisation and tracking of these arrangements, working closely with NHS and care sector partners through local Accident & Emergency/Urgent Care/Resilience and similar Boards.

In addition, North Yorkshire and York NHS and Local Government Silver Command (which meets weekly) will also be tracking capacity in community health, primary care, adult social care and domiciliary care, as well as residential and nursing homes, supported living and extra care.

The attached slides summarise the local arrangements.

Our shared commitment will continue to be to *Home First* by default, using Discharge to Assess as the framework for streaming people into the right location to meet their needs.

These designated accommodation arrangements are now being mobilised and will take effect in a phased way over the next 2 weeks. We would be grateful if you could share this letter, and accompanying slides, throughout your organisation.

We would like to thank you for your continued commitment and support to keep people safe during the COVID-19 pandemic within your services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Bloor', with a small dash at the end.

Amanda Bloor
Chair, North Yorkshire and York System Leadership Executive
On behalf of NHS, North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council
Chief Executives