

Guidance for care homes for dealings with media enquiries relating to coronavirus

April 2019

Introduction

- Over the past few days the attention of the local and national media has shifted from coronavirus-related stories about case numbers and deaths in hospitals to a focus on case numbers and deaths in care homes. This follows a number of reports on lack of PPE equipment and the vulnerability of care home environments to serious coronavirus outbreaks.
- This guidance is designed to provide support for care home managers and employees in the event of a press enquiry about coronavirus.

Introduction

- During the UK coronavirus outbreak, journalists may contact your care home, or try to film outside.
- We strongly recommend that you don't respond directly to any enquiries from journalists, even if they appear friendly and try to engage you in general conversation. If they can, they may use whatever information you provide in their stories.

What to do if you receive an enquiry from a journalist

- Staff at care homes are asked to either:
 - refer journalists to **Local Authority comms teams** or
 - refer journalists to your own **in-house comms teams** if applicable
- If care homes wish to refer media enquiries to their own in-house comms team, please also contact relevant local authority comms teams to ensure that any responses are joined up.
- If local authority comms teams are unable or unavailable to answer enquires BSW CCG comms will act as a back-up comms function
- Contact details are listed below

How to handle enquiries from journalists:

- When speaking to a journalist, always be friendly and polite, but do not be drawn into making any comment.
- Please use the below script as your guide:
- *“Thank you for your enquiry. As you are calling with a press enquiry, please contact the communications team at our Local Authority who are best placed to respond. They can be reached at....(see contact details below)”*
- If the journalist provides any details and you have time to record them, please try take down their name, publication and contact number. Please pass these details

How to handle journalists who may attempt to visit a care home

- If a journalist arrives at your care home and attempts to enter, politely explain that there is a non-essential visitor's restriction policy in place and therefore you are not able to grant access to the home.
- You may also remind them that the home is both private property and a home to vulnerable older people, who have a right not to be disturbed.
- Please alert your Local Authority or in house Communications team if there is a media presence outside the home.
- Do not feel pressured to answer any questions and, if they refuse to leave, you should call the police.

How to handle journalists who may film near or outside the home

- There may be instances where a journalist is seen filming outside the front of your care home.
- Unfortunately, as long as the journalist is not on private property, there is nothing that can be done about this and it is best to just leave them.
- Please remind all Colleagues to not engage with the journalists or film crew and to provide the contact details of the press office if they need further information.

Communications contacts:

Bath and North East Somerset Council Communications team:

- communications_marketing@bathnes.gov.uk

- 01225 4771 83

Swindon Borough Council Communications team:

- KBurchall@swindon.gov.uk
- 01793 463105

Wiltshire Council Communications team:

- communicaitons@wiltshire.gov.uk
- 07717 362115

Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group Communications team:

- bswccg.communications@nhs.net
- 07500 121720