

Healthwatch Kent Spotlight Series

**How do people feel about
Care Homes in Kent after
the pandemic?**



May 2022

Every year Care Homes from across Kent come together for a conference organised by the Kent Integrated Care Alliance. We wanted to make sure they were hearing from you about how you feel about Care Homes following the pandemic.

244 of you have told us how Covid has affected your views on care homes and care at home.

What did we hear?

The headlines were

46%

of people told us that Covid has affected your thoughts about a relative living in a Care Home

78%

felt that Covid has made it harder to get care at home





The feedback in more detail

Concerns about relative's wellbeing in future outbreaks

Respondents expressed fear about the possibility of future lockdowns and the isolation this may cause their loved one again.

“My relative was kept in her room for the whole 8 week stay with no interaction at all.”
“The lack of close-relative contact was hugely detrimental to wellbeing on all sides. The scars are likely to be very long lived.”

“The enforced isolation of residents from their families was heart-breaking during lockdown.”

“I would no longer think about placing a loved one in Care in case some lockdown occurred again, and we were prevented from seeing each other.”

Future Care Home selection would be based on Covid preparedness

Respondents advised that if a care home selection was required for their relative, an important consideration would include how prepared the Care Home is to prevent social isolation in the event of another outbreak.

“I would only consider Care homes that made an active effort to reduce isolation, for example visiting pods, outdoor visits or visits through windows.”

“I would not wish one of my relatives to presently be in a care environment unless I knew the home had high standards and support in place.”

“I’m not sure I would want a relative going into a care home. I would do my due diligence and research a lot before I committed.”

Fear of rate of transmission in future outbreaks

Respondents reflected on how quickly Covid spread at the height of the pandemic and the fear this caused their family about placing their relative at greater risk of infection.

“It concerns me how quickly Covid can spread around care homes, how easily it happens and how life-threatening it can be for older people. I would definitely try to delay moving my dad to a care home for as long as possible”

Concern that their relative will not be able to live freely in a Care Home

Feedback highlighted that families worry their relative will not be able to live their lives as they would choose to within the Care Home due to restrictions and control measures to prevent future transmission.

“It has made me feel less likely to have a relative living in a care home, as I would be worried they would not have enough autonomy over what they are allowed to do, if anything like the pandemic happens again.”

Care home residence is sometimes the only option

Respondents advised that sometimes their relatives become so poorly that they believe living within a Care Home setting is the safest option for them, despite Covid fears.

“I think if I needed a relative to be in a Care Home, it would be a matter of not having any other options for their support and care so I'd have accepted that regardless of the pandemic.”

“My husband's dementia is getting worse and I think I'll need to arrange a place at a care home soon. Covid definitely wouldn't affect my decision on that as I don't think there's another option.”

Confidence that Care Homes are experienced in managing Covid now

Respondents described feeling reassured that Care Homes have become used to managing the risk of Covid and the safety of their residents and poses no greater threat than managing other illness outbreaks.

“I think in the early months of covid my answer would have been yes; but now I think care homes have become used to managing covid and understand how to mitigate the risk of transmission. I don't feel that it poses any additional risk than care homes having to manage the spread of a sickness bug etc.”

“I don't see covid as a big risk now, it's something that we just have to live with.”

Staff shortages impacting on care at home

Many respondents believe that a lack of staff has resulted in significant barriers to receiving care at home for their relatives.

“The staffing difficulties in care homes were worsened by the sacking of the unvaccinated staff many of whom had worked all through the early months of the pandemic.”

“There are fewer people working in the service, as they can earn more money doing other jobs. For those that remain, the increase in fuel and living costs may mean that it is not viable to continue working in the profession - many staff don't get paid fully for their time travelling between clients or unreasonable expectations are made as to how long it should take a care worker to travel between clients.”

“Workforce is limited, many people who worked in care have left due to Brexit and the pandemic. There is also limited funding in the system so there is a lack of flexibility or choice for people to get care at home.”

Long delays in receiving care and/or equipment

Respondents told us that they face long waits in receiving support for their relative at home. Some opted to pay for private care just to have a brief respite from caring responsibilities.

“From speaking to family/friends I have heard stories of delays in receiving equipment and difficulties in accessing support workers/nurses etc unless you pay privately.”
“Services all seem under more pressure, with backlogs and less time to provide care at home.”

“I've had to pay privately for a carer to sit with my husband on a Wednesday so I can have a little break.”

What did we hear?	What have we done?
People visiting relatives in care homes being given contrasting information about testing rules	We have raised the issue with the Care Quality Commission and Kent County Council
People being discharged without a social care needs assessment	We are discussing the issue with KCC
TEPs introduced during pandemic are being auto-renewed by GPs	We have raised this with the primary care team at the Clinical Commissioning Group have will share their response.

Need more information?

Get in touch here



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texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's
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will make contact.**

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