

Cabinet Member Update
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Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

I am delighted to be able to provide colleagues with an update on ongoing work being done by our Adult Social Care and Public Health teams. Without question, the coronavirus pandemic has drastically altered our way of life. Yet, in such times of frenzied change, it is comforting to note that our resolve to provide quality care to residents and pioneer excellent practice has been unaffected by the challenges that COVID-19 has brought about. If anything, the pandemic has served to motivate us all towards better realising these goals and I am pleased that our residents have been able to see these efforts clearly – over the last few months.

From establishing the outstanding NHS Seacole Centre on Headley Court within six weeks to launching the innovative Surrey Virtual Wellbeing Hub and even using unique technological solutions to keep families in touch with relatives in our care homes; our staff and partners across Heartlands, CSH Surrey, the ICSs, Surrey Choices and others have risen to the occasion and supported us in our desire to meet head on the challenges of COVID-19. In addition to this, Surrey County Council has worked with partners to develop additional refuge provision within the county, which has helped us provide further support to survivors of Domestic Abuse; at a time when nationally and locally – there has been a clear surge in demand for support.

Throughout this pandemic, our staff have demonstrated that they are the pride of our county, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their exemplary work over the course of the last few weeks. And colleagues, allow me also to pay tribute to the late Dave Hill, who played (as he often did) an instrumental and invaluable role in supporting the creation of our NHS Seacole Centre. Dave leaves behind an enormous and rich legacy and I am determined that our services will build upon this over the months and years ahead.

In fighting COVID-19, we have made much progress, but we are not out of the woods yet.

As Government continues to ease the restrictions around the present lockdown, our plans for recovery continue at pace, to ensure that both residents and staff can be assured of their safety at this critical time. We will continue to “test, test, test”; providing our Public Health teams with crucial knowledge and data, as this feeds into the wider NHS Test and Trace scheme – as we look to control the virus and save lives. That is why, should any Surrey resident experience symptoms, they can easily access and should access a COVID-19 test. In addition to this, we will continue diligent work in Surrey’s care homes – increasing the testing of staff and those who use our services, to ensure that we are better responsive to the adverse impacts COVID-19 has had on the elderly.

Residents can also expect to see a new public information campaign, which we hope will best educate and motivate all communities on how everyone can play their part in Surrey’s onward recovery.

Much of the work in this field is being coordinated by a recently convened Local Engagement Outbreak Board, which we have a leading presence on – as the lead authority. This board – comprising of members and health professionals will guarantee Surrey’s preparedness for any localised peaks in cases and as such, it shall be developing and testing the robustness of our strategy and plans over the coming days and weeks; making use of learning that emerges for incidences and experiences across the country.

Although we are turning our focus towards recovery, it is clear that we can already take stock at what has worked and where we can do better.

We know that the collective will is there amongst partners to provide best outcomes for our residents and that we are aligned in our commitment to early intervention, prevention and community-based services. However, time and time again – this commitment and will has been hindered by multiple levels of governance, a rigid focus on acute hospitals and a failure to achieve financial balance. If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it is that to secure best health outcomes – we must have greater rein and freedom to invest in our communities and join-up essential services to offer a more holistic, throughput care service for all.

It is for that reason, that last month, the Leader and Chief Executive wrote to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to suggest a trial devolved health system for Surrey with local political accountability – so that we can quickly put into formalised practice the great strides we have made with partners in this pandemic, while also forging more determinedly and ambitiously ahead for our residents.

Even so, this will be no magic wand – but merely the springboard upon which – I am confident, we will be able to ensure that we can truly deliver on our commitment to provide quality care and excellent practice to all who call Surrey home.