



COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

COVID-19 QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT REPORT 2022

Community Support Services

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Community Support Services

meeting individual needs with quality care



9 March 2019



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INTRODUCTION

In 2022, restrictions enforced by the Government to keep people safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic were gradually reduced, the last remaining restrictions for the general public were removed in July.

Beyond this date, the Health & Social Care Sector continued to work under separate and specific guidance from the Government and the Local Authority to ensure the vulnerable people we support are protected.

Throughout the year, the COVID-19 coordinator continued to monitor and manage COVID-19 within the service as and when positive cases arose, as well as continuing to reinforce measures which could prevent the risk of COVID-19 entering into service. As Government guidance for the Health & Social Care Sector was updated, as were CSS' procedures and risk assessments.

As discussed in this report, at times during 2022, the contrast between general public guidance and Health & Social Care sector guidance brought new challenges. As we aimed to support people to live the life they wish as independently and freely as possible, the contrasting guidance increasingly came into conflict with this. For example, as universal mask wearing was removed for the general public, the Government continued to advise that staff during support sessions should wear masks, this clearly highlighted within the community that an individual was being supported and also effected the 'normality' of the supported living settings that CSS manages.

In July, as the Government had already implemented their living with COVID-19 strategy for the general public, CSS looked at ways we could work to our own risk-assessed living with COVID-19 strategy to balance well-being, equality and the duty to keep the people we support and staff safe.

2022 was also a year of celebration, as the risk of COVID-19 transmissions decreased it became safe to reintroduce social groups for the people we support and our annual Care Awards were able to take place in person again. The community spirit of Community Support Services was re-welcomed as we were able to enjoy each others' company and celebrate each others' hard work over the pandemic years.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Specific COVID-19 Policies and Procedures continued to be updated regularly in 2022 as Government and Local Authority guidance changed. The following policies were updated throughout the year to provide employees with guidance:

- **Covid-19 Policy**

This policy was updated throughout the year to provide employees with important information about the current protocols in place to protect the individuals we support as well as employees. As the virus mutated, the recognised COVID-19 symptoms were updated here.

- **PPE Policy**

This policy was updated throughout the year to provide employees with updated guidance around the current advised use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- **Covid-19 Testing Policy**

This policy was updated throughout the year to provide employees and the people who use our service with clear instructions and guidelines of when and how to complete Covid-19 tests in line with current guidance.

- **Infection Control**

This policy was updated throughout the year to reflect changes to the 'COVID-19 hub' of policies above.

- **Essential Nail Care Guidelines**

This policy was introduced during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to enable staff to support people who use our service to continue with nail care when close contact beauty / podiatry services had to close. This policy was archived in 2022 as beauty and podiatry services reopened.

COMMUNICATION & SHARING INFORMATION

Throughout the pandemic, illustrative guidelines and posters were distributed within the company for employees and the people using our service regarding; what and when to wear PPE, hand washing technique posters, and any relevant informative posters issued by Public Health England concerning current campaigns (such as Autumn 2022 Winter Booster programme).

Easy read guides and posters for the people who use our service were also made available. Where required, bespoke easy read guides were created for individuals we support to explain current guidance. For example, when the Government ended the legal requirement to isolate following testing positive this messaging sometimes caused confusion for the people we support when they tested positive in terms of what they should and shouldn't do to keep others safe. We created an easy read guide that explained that while it's not a legal requirement to isolate, resting is still a good idea if you feel unwell, and wearing a mask in communal spaces in their home and in the community (if they wanted to go outside) can help to protect others.

In 2022, we digitised our Supported Living Communication books, this enabled CSS' main office to access the information being shared within the staff team. This proved a very useful asset when a positive case occurred at one of these settings, the COVID-19 coordinator was able to quickly and easily inform staff of the situation and provide guidance on what to do to manage this.

REPORTING

In 2022, the NHS capacity tracker reduced how much data they required care providers to report on.

The following questions were reduced from a daily to weekly submission:

- How many domiciliary individuals who use our service have a suspected or confirmed diagnosis of Covid-19
- How many employees are unable to attend work due to Covid-19
- Current vaccination rates amongst staff

In 2022 we also continued to follow guidance on reporting positive COVID-19 cases to Calderdale Infection prevention Control Team, and where applicable Calderdale Business Relationships and Public Health England.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

As COVID-19 restrictions eased and Government guidance was updated, we responded by updating our own implemented risk assessments in accordance, at times this meant that some risk assessments could be archived.

- **Employee Risk Assessments**

- *Risk assessments which Identified Covid-19 risk levels to employees with under-lying health conditions were reviewed as appropriate with the staff members.*
- *The end of 'shielding' meant that the Return to work risk assessment process following 12-week isolation (Shielding) periods to assess and manage risks was archived.*
- *Individual PPE risk assessment for those employees identified with a medical condition were implemented and reviewed as appropriate.*
- *Individual return to work risk assessments for employees who have been Covid-19 positive, or a close contact with a positive person outside of work, were carried out throughout the year as required to help to prevent the risk of COVID-19 entering into service. These templates were updated to reflect changes in Government Guidance.*

During the Summer of 2022, the Government announced their 'Living with COVID-19' strategy and the last restrictions were lifted from the entertainment industry. As restrictions were removed for general public interaction, this led us to archiving Risk Assessments such; as individuals we support in Supported Living visiting families over Christmastime, and outreach support risk assessments.

- **Living with COVID-19 Risk Assessment**

The Health & Social Care Sector continued to be guided with COVID-19 Risk Reduction measures by the Government throughout 2022, at times, this guidance conflicted with other factors such as promoting wellbeing and inclusion by returning to 'normal' like the rest of the public, and living in a freer and less clinical environment.

Following this, we implemented our own 'Living with COVID-19' Risk Assessment. The identified risk that the removal and/ or reduction of COVID-19 Risk Reduction measures, especially the removal of mandatory universal mask wearing (that had been removed for the general public), could increase the risk of COVID-19 infections within Service Provision was balanced with an understanding that the risk of serious illness and death had drastically decreased through the rollout of the vaccine programme and mutation of the virus itself.

Calderdale IPC developed a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating to indicate the prevalence of local infection rates within health and social care settings updated to providers every fortnight via the local authority's 'Provider Bulletin'. This provides guidance as to what risk

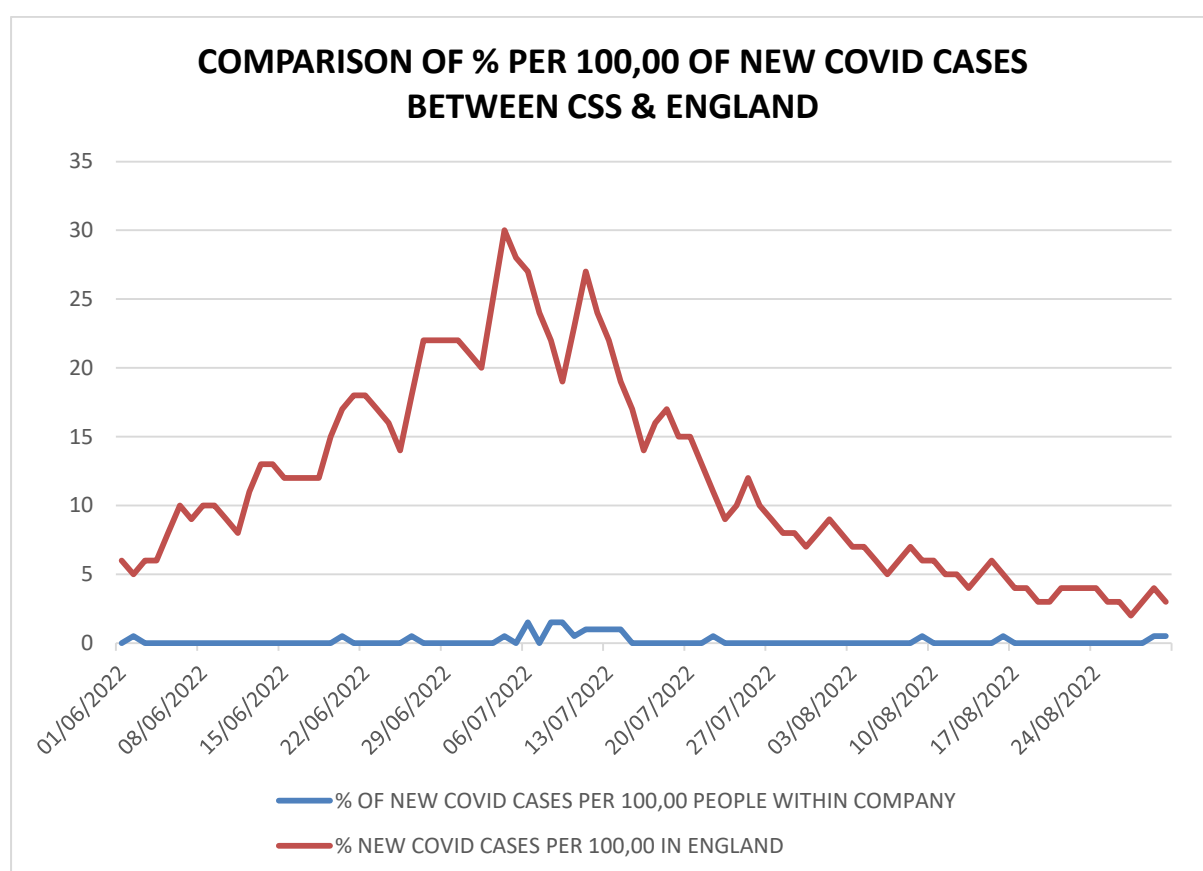
controls should be in place, and whether these should be adjusted to reflect the current risk.

The Living with COVID-19 Risk Assessment is used by the COVID-19 coordinator as guidance when to inform staff that extra risk control measures should be returned to:

- When the Council's RAG rating was amber/amber or above
- When supporting someone who has tested positive
- When a positive case is identified within the staff team
- When a staff member has come into close-contact with a positive case outside of work.

Risk Control measures include: return to universal mask wearing, increased use of PPE and clothes changing, communications with external visitors, increased cleaning, focus on ventilation, daily temperature checking, increased testing programme.

We analysed the data of positive COVID-19 infections 01/06/2022 and 24/08/2022 by comparing the rate of new cases per 100,000 within England and in the company. CSS made the risk assessed decision following consultation with the people we support and their families to remove universal mask wearing (unless individuals we support requested this measure to remain in place). Although testing became less accessible to the public in 2022, the graph below demonstrates that that the removal of universal mask wearing did not create an additional spike of new cases that was proportionate to the rest of the country.



INFECTION CONTROL

• PPE

Following the introduction of free PPE supplied by the Government we have ensured stock levels are maintained. As COVID-19 became less prevalent, PPE ordering reduced from a weekly necessity to an as and when required basis.

The PPE we hold includes:

- Aprons
- CPR Masks
- Glasses (Protective)
- Gloves
- Gowns
- Hand Wash
- Headbands (For mask comfort)
- Masks
- Sanitiser
- Shields
- Shoe Covers
- Thermometers
- Visors

All employees who support the people who use our service were issued with a bum bag. This bum bag is for staff to carry containing emergency first aid PPE. Included in the bag is: Aprons x2, Emergency CPR Face Cover, Gloves x2 pair, Masks x2 & 100ml sanitizer. When stock needs replenishing staff contact the office.

• Supported Living

All employees who work in the Supported Living houses follow the PPE guidelines when supporting individuals.

Employee rotas are produced to ensure the same staff work in the same houses where possible (especially when a positive COVID-19 case has been identified within the house).

House Managers are prompted to check the PPE stock levels within the house on their weekly check sheet.

COVID-19 TESTING

Throughout 2022, as the COVID-19 virus mutated and the risk level changed, we followed Government guidance for the testing programme to follow. Our staff team were incredibly patient and adjustable as we informed them of changes in guidance in order to keep people safe.

Time period of testing regime	Testing regime summary
January - February	Continuation of regime at the end of 2021, 1x PCR test and 2x LFD tests per week
February - April	LFD test completed prior to each shift
April - August	2x LFD tests completed per week
September onwards	Symptomatic and Precaution LFD testing only – removal of a routine testing programme

When the testing regime changed, staff were communicated with via email, on the brolly portal, via updates to the COVID-19 testing policy and other methods. Results were recorded and monitored within a spreadsheet.

Some changes were particularly challenging, the February-April pre-shift testing asked a lot of a workforce who had already worked tirelessly, and we experienced a significant decrease in test results received during this period of time.

If a staff member did not consent to the Government guided testing regime, an individual risk assessment was completed. These risk assessments looked at a reduced testing routine, and ascertained if the staff member was willing to complete tests if precaution/ outbreak testing was required.

When a positive case occurred within the service, the staff team and supported individuals were informed as soon as possible and advised what precaution or outbreak testing was currently required to try and contain the situation. Further guidance was provided as and when required via liaison with Calderdale IPC team.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

COVID-19 vaccination statuses of employees and the people we support were continued to be recorded throughout the year, once consent was provided by the staff member.

On 6 January 2022, the Government created new legislation, approved by Parliament, which amended the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014. This extended the scope of mandatory vaccination requirements for staff beyond registered care homes to health and wider social care settings in England.

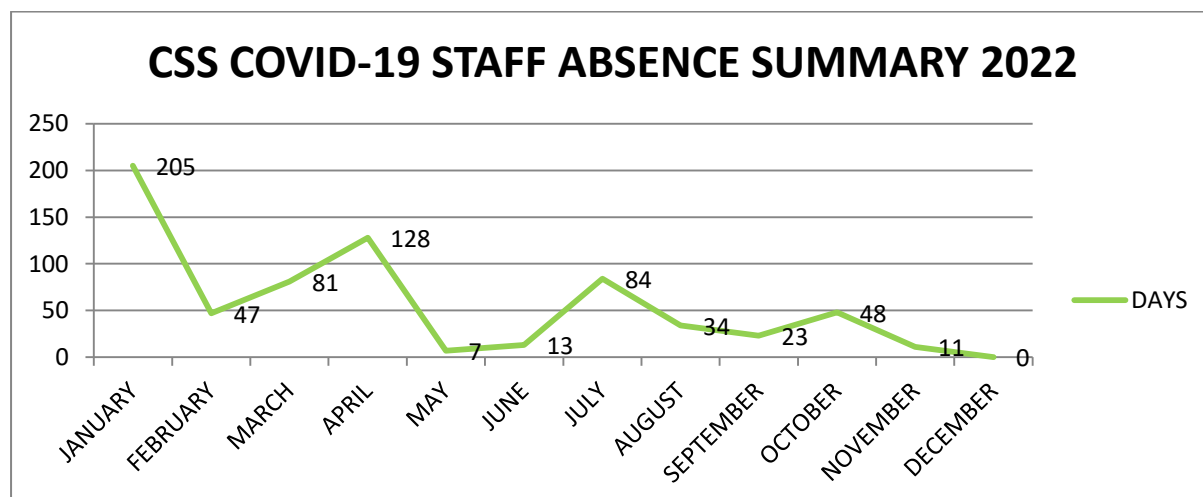
At the beginning of 2022, Community Support Services continued to meet and engage with staff who had declined the vaccination, a small number of employees at this time were faced with the possibility of their time with the company and the sector at the end of March 2022. This was an extremely unsettling time for the staff members and also management.

On 1st March, it was announced that this legislation was repealed. Whilst this was welcomed and we were pleased to be able to continue employing these valued staff members, we acknowledge that this was a stressful time, compounded by the stress and hard work everyone had put in throughout the pandemic to keep people safe.

In autumn 2022, a new round of vaccination boosters were announced for the health and social care sector. We distributed posters and information on our broolly portal regarding this.

EMPLOYEE ABSENCE DUE TO COVID-19

The summary below illustrates how many employee workdays were lost due to Covid-19. This data has been extracted from our Covid-19 employee testing and isolation register.



Each of these days had to be covered by other employees, often this was completed at extremely short notice.

Community Support Services have always recruited, trained, and developed employees in a consistent way. This has enabled us to maximise our staffing potential throughout the pandemic and move staff into different settings they would not normally work in without severely impacting the quality of service we provide.

Total days lost:

1,060 (2020)

635 (2021)

681 (2022)

TRAINING

In 2022, we continued to closely monitor transmission rates of COVID-19. When these were low and with robust COVID-19 risk assessments in place, face-to-face training for new and essential practical topics, as well as bespoke complimentary training led by the needs of the people we support were reintroduced.

In 2022, we continued to blend our learning offers to ensure compliance using Community Support Services' bespoke online training booklets.

Online Refresher workbooks	Face-to-Face training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Confidentiality & Data Protection- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion- Fire Safety (Including Evacuation Policy)- Food Hygiene Awareness- Health & Safety- Infection Control- Managing Nutrition & Hydration Needs <i>(New course for 2022)</i>- Medication- Mental Capacity Act- Person Centred Support & Person Centred Planning <i>(New course for 2022)</i>- Safer People Handling- Safeguarding Adults & Safeguarding Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Care Certificate- Emergency First Aid at Work- Medication Competency Checks- Bespoke training for staff teams including;<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Diabetes Awarenesso Dysphasiao Consistent Team Approacho Enabling brain injury survivors

By completing training this way, it has enabled staff to develop their learning around different subjects that will enable them to provide outstanding support to the people who use our service, and this has enabled the company to continue to maintain compliance of mandatory subjects during unprecedented times.

In 2022, new employees were continued to be sent LFD test training so that we could monitor their understanding of processing LFD tests, especially if they were required to support someone with this.

SUMMARY

Communication

Communication between all parties such as the Government, Local Authority, CQC, Health & Social Care, Public Health England and Skills for Care has been vital during the pandemic. All communication channels are open to provide everyone with key points and changing information. It has been extremely useful to share advice, experience, and information amongst various providers across Calderdale via Zoom calls - questions or required clarification was able to be collectively passed onto the local authority.

Preparation

Preparation is fundamental to the success of the company progressing through the pandemic. Forward thinking is crucial for the implementation of smooth processes and procedures. Flexibility in evolving Policies & Procedures as situations and scenarios evolve has been instrumental in preparing for the challenges Covid-19 has brought.

Consistency

Community Support Services have always recruited, trained, and developed employees in the same way. This has enabled us to maximise our staffing potential throughout the pandemic and move staff into different settings they would not normally work in without impacting the quality of service we provide.

Wellbeing

As COVID-19 restrictions eased, focus was turned towards improving wellbeing;

- Holidays were able to be reintroduced for the people we support
- Discos and parties to mark special occasions such as Halloween were able to be reintroduced
- A social group was formed on Thursday evenings, this a fun group where a variety of activities take place such as movie nights or Bush tucker style challenges!
- A Sunday social walking group set up by one of our house managers has been very popular with the people we support
- Our 2022 staff Care Awards was able to be held face-to-face again to celebrate the hard work of our lovely staff team
- Group Christmas parties and dinners were also able to take place again!

Looking ahead to 2023...

We will continue to follow regulatory guidance around COVID-19, follow our Local Authority's monitoring of infection rates in our community and continue to follow our procedures and update as required, as this has been very successful in navigating the challenges COVID-19 has brought. We will also look forward to continuing to move safely beyond the pandemic!