

Coronavirus – outbreaks in two Lothian care homes

NHS Lothian has reported that investigations are underway in two care homes in Lothian into significant outbreaks of Covid-19 among staff and residents.

The multi-agency Incident Management Teams (IMT), led by NHS Lothian, were set up as soon as cases were identified in Redmill Care Home in West Lothian and Milford House in Edinburgh.

A small number of residents who tested positive, and were residents of Redmill Care Home and Milford House have since died. NHS Lothian are unable to be specific about the number because the total across both homes is fewer than five. (This is for reasons of privacy.)

NHS Lothian say: “As soon as the first cases were identified, the homes were closed to visitors and additional testing of all staff and residents was introduced as part of the enhanced outbreak response. This proactive measure is designed to identify people who had no symptoms or who were in the early stages of the disease.

“As a result more people have been identified with Covid-19 before they showed symptoms which means it was possible for them to begin self-isolation sooner and that additional infection prevention and control measures could be put in place to reduce the risk of further transmission.”

Both homes are working closely with Care Home Support Teams from West Lothian and Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Lothian to ensure all infection control measures are in place, and enhanced, to prevent further transmission.

In Redmill Care Home, a total of 53 other residents and staff have been confirmed with Covid-19. Further rounds of testing are being carried out.

The enhanced outbreak testing programme has also been introduced in Milford House in Edinburgh. A total of 29 residents and staff there have tested positive for Covid-19.

Additional supportive visits by the Care Home Support Teams to both homes have already taken place. These provide more support to staff around updated guidance, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and infection control measures.

Dr Frederike Garbe, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, NHS Lothian and Chair of the IMT, said: "We are working really closely with both care homes, the Health and Social Care Partnerships and the Care Inspectorate to provide all the support necessary.

"The enhanced outbreak testing regime allows us to identify staff and residents who have the virus before they become symptomatic.

"That gives us the opportunity to introduce enhanced infection control measures and barriers sooner than we would previously have been able to. It allows staff and residents to commence self-isolation before they become symptomatic, which in turn reduces the likelihood of passing on the infection to others.

"As part of the infection control measures, the homes were closed to visitors. We know this is difficult for residents and their relatives, but it is necessary to ensure the

outbreaks are brought under control as quickly as possible and we and thank relatives for their co-operation and understanding.

“It also serves as a timely reminder that even if you do not yet have symptoms, you can still have Covid-19 and that is why self-isolation is crucial as soon as you have been in contact with a confirmed case.”

If you have any concerns about your health, or if you need to book a Covid-19 test because you have developed symptoms (high temperature, a new continuous cough and/or a loss or change in sense of smell or taste) please visit the NHS Inform website www.nhsinform.scot or for non-clinical advice call 0800 028 2816.

NHS Lothian says that everyone should stay at home if anyone in the household has symptoms of Covid-19.

Scottish Labour Lothian MSP Neil Findlay said: “This is a worrying time for all care home residents and their families, and I would like to express my condolences to the families who have lost loved ones. The company and NHS Lothian must be transparent with staff and residents about the outbreak and their plans to tackle it.

“This outbreak demonstrates that care homes remain a key front line in the fight against Covid-19. It is crucial that routine testing of care home residents and staff is maintained across Scotland, and extended to everyone involved in care-giving responsibilities.”

Scottish Labour Lothian MSP Sarah Boyack said: “This is a very sad time for those who have lost valued family members and friends.

“The recent outbreak of infections and deaths only goes to show that care homes continue to play a vital role as part of frontline services in the fight against the pandemic.

“I urge NHS Lothian, the Care Home Support Teams and Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnerships to continue working closely together and step up testing as a matter of urgency. They must ensure that all protection measures are being fully observed and that residents and staff have access to frequent testing and PPE. Our vulnerable members of society – and the dedicated staff who care for them – deserve nothing less.”