



**Report on the Impact of
Coronavirus/Covid-19 on Care Homes
in Redbridge**

May 2020

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings from our telephone survey conducted between Monday 4th May and Wednesday 13th May 2020.

Although we identified at least 69 care and nursing homes within the borough of Redbridge, it has been difficult to confirm that this was the true number as there were a number of differences found throughout our research. We have now confirmed there are 71 care or nursing homes within the borough.

Our survey and the report are not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all care and nursing homes, only an account of the responses received from staff who were willing to contribute confidentially at the time.

Introduction

At the end of April 2020, all patients were being routinely tested for COVID-19 (Coronavirus) before being discharged from hospital, according to the local NHS. Many individuals could have been recuperating from COVID-19, some of whom would require ongoing nursing or social care.

Timely discharge needed to happen to ensure the NHS could maintain capacity for acutely ill patients.

We were informed that national NHS guidance¹ was being followed and were assured that:

‘Any patient who does not need an NHS bed will continue to be discharged in line with the current Discharge Requirements with continued due regard to their safety and the safety of those with whom they will have contact after discharge.’

HWR were concerned when it was confirmed by our local hospital trusts that many patients would be discharged into the community without having the results of their test known prior to discharge. We were told that care and nursing homes should ‘treat people returning from hospital as though they had COVID-19’ and to isolate for two weeks within the home.

This survey seeks to engage with care and nursing home managers to ask whether they have any concerns with accepting possible COVID-19 positive residents into their homes. We are asking them if they feel confident that they are able to provide a safe environment which will not put undue risk on other residents or indeed their care staff.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-social-care-action-plan/covid-19-our-action-plan-for-adult-social-care>

Research Objectives

In order to understand the effects of the current pandemic on our local care homes, we aimed to:

- Understand the impact of Coronavirus/Covid-19 on residents and staff
- Identify if care homes can access personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Identify if care homes can access testing

Methodology

HWR contacted a number of care homes across Redbridge to gather a range of experiences.

We captured views from care homes that offered different specialist support: Learning Disability, Mental Health, Dementia, Nursing or Personal Care, Physical/sensory disabilities. The size of homes differed, from those with four beds to those with 105 beds and homes that were based geographically across the borough.

Our aim was to speak to the manager or deputy manager in all cases. Where they were unavailable or unwell; we attempted to call back several times.

In most cases, we spoke to the care home manager. Where this was not possible, we spoke to the deputy manager or a member of staff. Some staff wanted to speak with our volunteers and therefore we accommodated this.

We contacted 40 care homes out of the 71 (56%) in Redbridge², of which 31 homes agreed to participate in the short survey.

We have categorised the care homes into three different size groupings based on the number of beds they offer. We used the same categories as identified by the Care Quality Commission.³

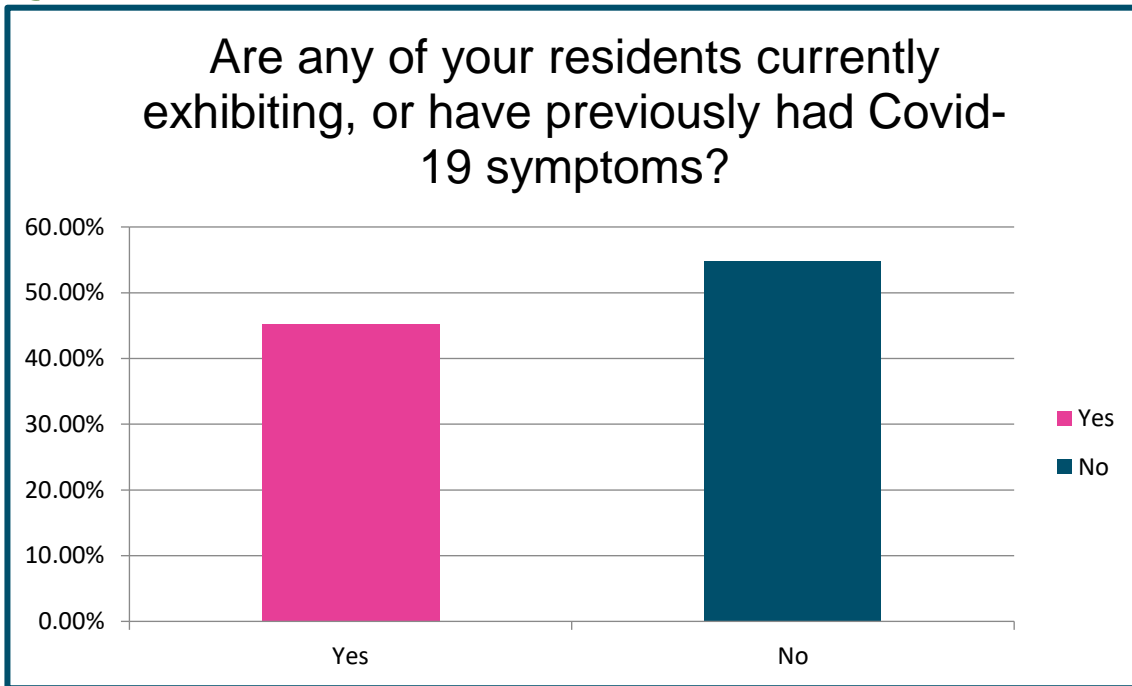
- Small = 1-10 beds; Medium = 11-49; and, Large = 50 and above

² <https://mylife.redbridge.gov.uk/media/15604/redbridge-care-directory-2020.pdf>

³ https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20170703_ASC_end_of_programme_FINAL2.pdf

Findings

Question 1



Response:

A total of 31 (100%) responses were given:

- 14 (45%) had residents who are currently exhibiting, or have previously had Coronavirus/Covid-19 symptoms
- 17 (55%) had residents who are currently not exhibiting, or have not previously had Coronavirus/Covid-19 symptoms

Question 2

Could you tell us how many?

Response:

Staff told us that 53 residents were currently exhibiting, or had previously had Coronavirus/Covid-19 symptoms affected within 14 homes.

Comment:

Eight (57%) of the homes affected by coronavirus were smaller care homes, four were medium sized and two were large.

Question 3

How are you coping?

Response:

Five care homes responded to this question.

Four care homes said they were coping well or quite well with one care home telling us they were having difficulty.

“It’s distressing for staff, some staff are working 15 hours a day, 7 days per week”

“Coping ok, by isolating them (residents) for 14 days. Making good use of PPE and ensuring that surgical masks are utilised.”

Comment:

Of those homes that were coping well, one has not had any residents who have exhibited Coronavirus/Covid-19 symptoms.

The three care homes who said they are coping have residents who have exhibited Coronavirus/Covid-19 symptoms, but no deaths due to Coronavirus/Covid-19.

The care home that said they are coping with difficulty has residents who have exhibited Coronavirus/Covid-19 symptoms and residents who have died due to Coronavirus/Covid-19.

Question 4

Are residents in self-isolation?

Response

Seven care homes responded to this question.

Five homes said they have residents in self-isolation.

“One resident in the home at present is isolating having been tested positive in hospital.”

“(We are) self- isolating residents that show symptoms.”

Question 5

What systems have you put in place to manage this?

Response

Seven care homes responded to this question.

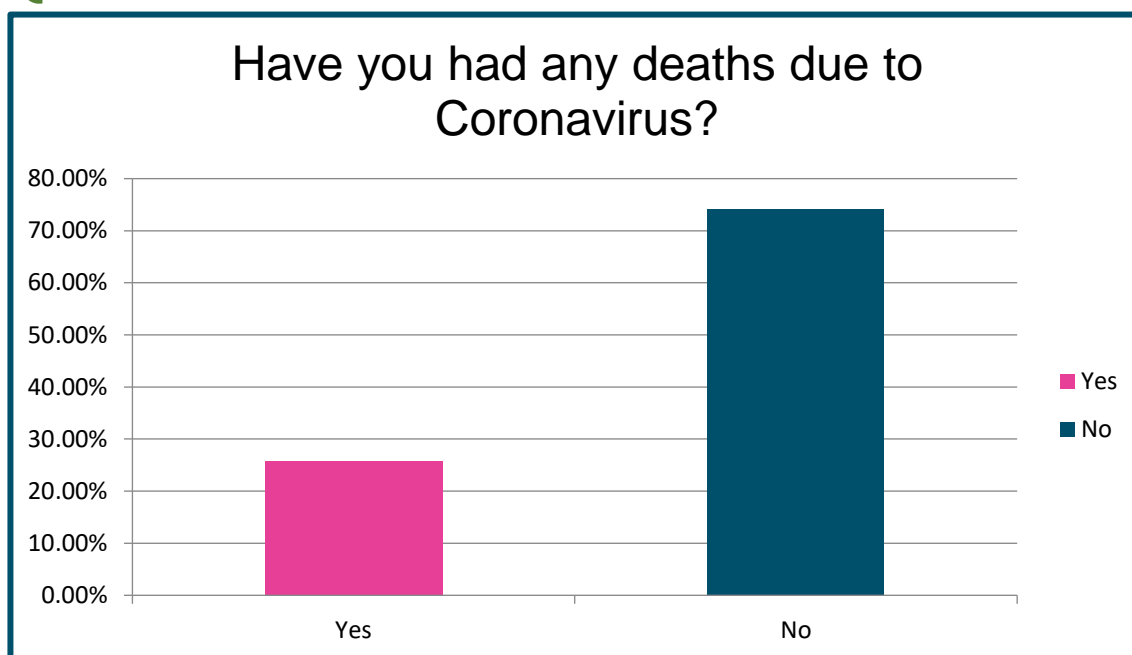
Four respondents mentioned staff wearing PPE; two mentioned social distancing and two mentioned residents self-isolating.

“Barrier nursing - the nurse who provides personal care has PPE - an apron, gloves and mask. We have bins in the room where everything is disposed of. Laundry and clothing are bagged up and left in the room for 72 hours and then done separately.”

“(We are) only letting two people in the lounge at once so that they can socially distance.”

“They (the residents) are exercising in the garden at a safe distance.”

Question 6



Response:

A total of 31 (100%) responses were given:

- 8 (26%) care homes told us they have had deaths due to Coronavirus/Covid-19
- 23 (74%) care homes told us they have not had deaths due to Coronavirus/Covid-19

Question 7

If yes, how many?

Response:

Eight care homes answered this question and told us that 32 residents had died due to Coronavirus/Covid-19.

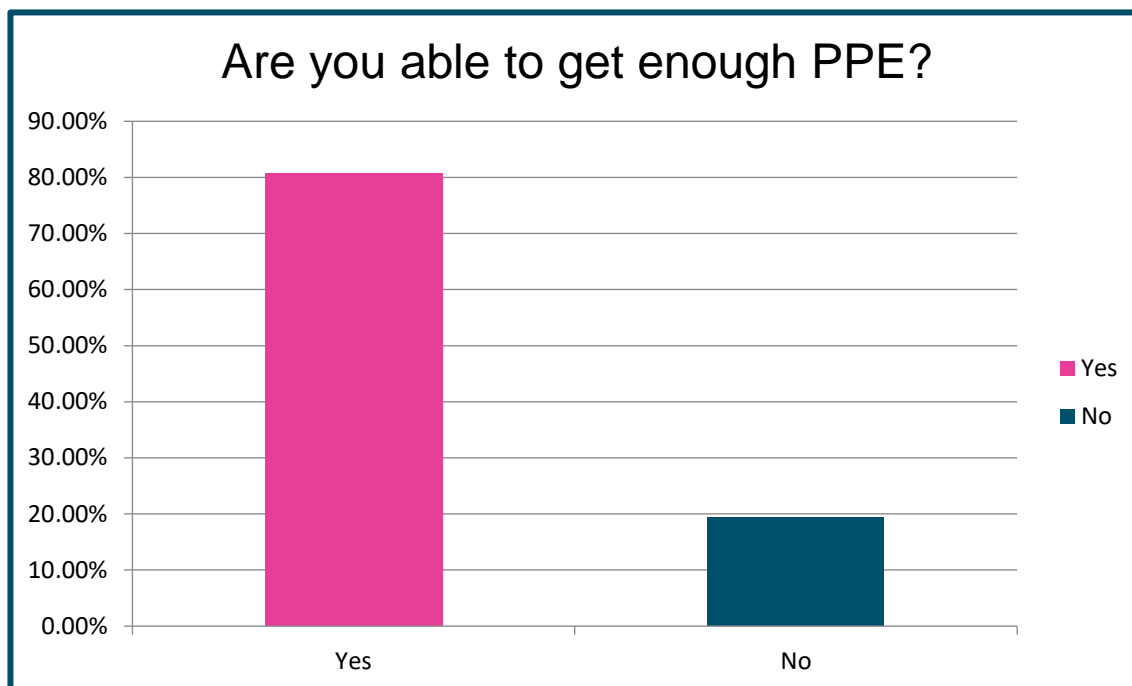
Additional Information:

The number of care home deaths is unverified and relates to the response to our question asked between 4 and 13 May 2020. These figures may not reflect the national data⁴ as some care home residents may have died in hospital and clarification was not sought at the time.

⁴

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/datasets/deathregistrationsandoccurrencesbylocalauthorityandhealthboard>

Question 8



Response:

A total of 31 (100%) responses were given:

- 25 (81%) care homes said they are able to get enough PPE
- 6 (19%) care homes said they are not able to get enough PPE

Comments given included:

“Yes, (we have had PPE) until this week. Now only a limited amount available so it is being rationed.”

“(We are) short of gloves and face masks. Have been in touch with the borough.”

Additional information:

Of the six care homes who said they are not able to get enough PPE, three have had cases of Coronavirus/Covid-19 and two told us they have had deaths.

Three care homes said there were initial issues with access to PPE but this has now been rectified.

Question 9

If not, what are you short of?

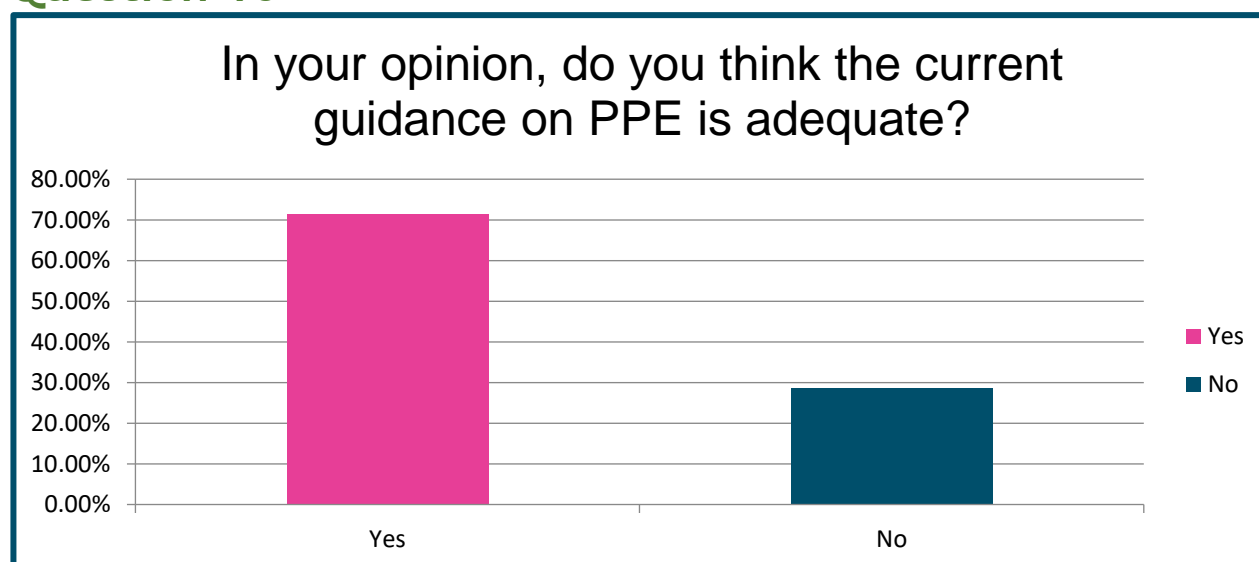
Response:

Responses to this question included: face masks, gloves, different items at different times and never enough PPE.

“Usual on-line supplier is out of stock of most required items.”

“Sometimes there is a waiting list. Hand sanitiser normally takes 2-3 days, sometimes takes 2 weeks.”

Question 10



Response:

A total of 21 care homes responded to this question.

- 15 (71%) care home managers/members of staff we spoke to said they do think the current guidance on PPE is adequate

“PPE guidance is ok if following it, e.g. (implementing) barrier nursing.”

- 6 (29%) care home managers/members of staff we spoke to said they do not think the current guidance on PPE is adequate

One manager suggested that using PPE should be risk assessed as she felt it might not be necessary for all care homes. She said it could then go to those care homes who needed it, but were having difficulty accessing it.

“We are a mental health specialist care home and wearing masks is causing anxiety, for one resident in particular. As we have been so strict from the start, I don’t know whether we need masks, but we are sticking to the guidance.”

Question 11

Where do you get your PPE from?

Response:

We received 30 responses to this question.

Twelve care homes told us they get their PPE from the London Borough of Redbridge (some additionally get stock from private suppliers). These homes said they are able to get enough PPE. Several mentioned that London Borough of Redbridge are keeping them well supplied.

“Redbridge Council very helpful, continually sending supplies which arrive on time.”

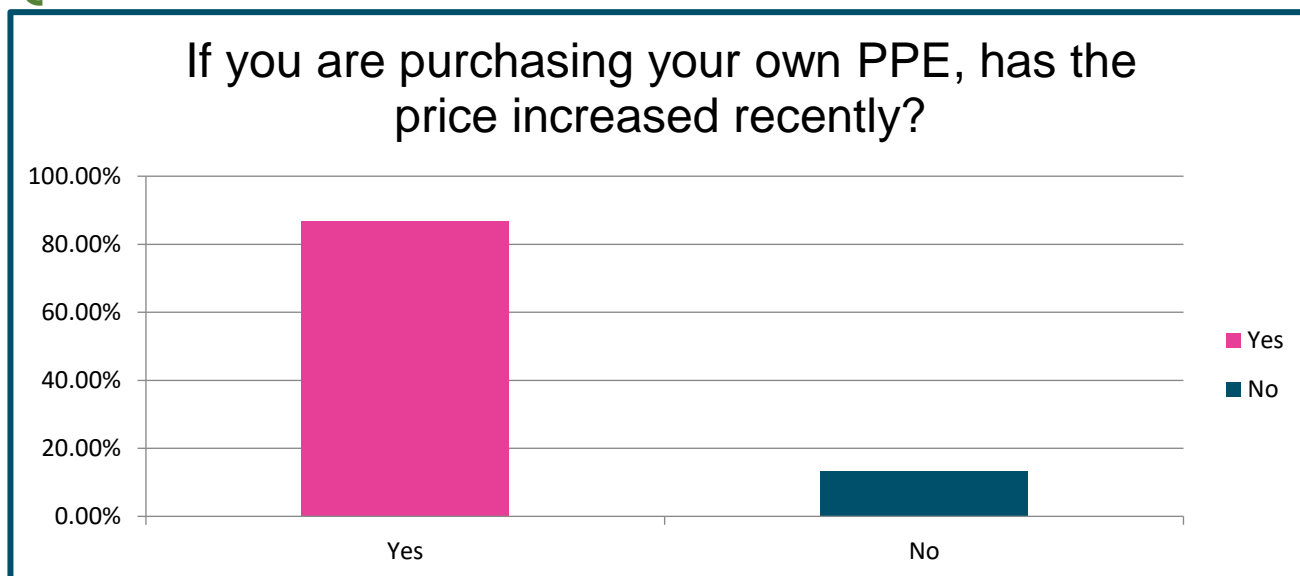
A list of private suppliers was given by the other care homes.

Three care homes mentioned receiving donations of PPE.

“Get PPE from generous donations from the local community, e.g. curtain shops providing masks, construction company donating aprons and goggles.”

“Royal Mencap Society keep us supplied.”

Question 12



Response:

A total of 15 care homes (48%) response to this question:

- 13 (87%) care homes said the price of PPE has increased recently
- 2 (13%) care homes said the price of PPE has not increased recently

Comment

It is concerning to note the number of care homes experiencing increases in the costs of PPE.

Question 13

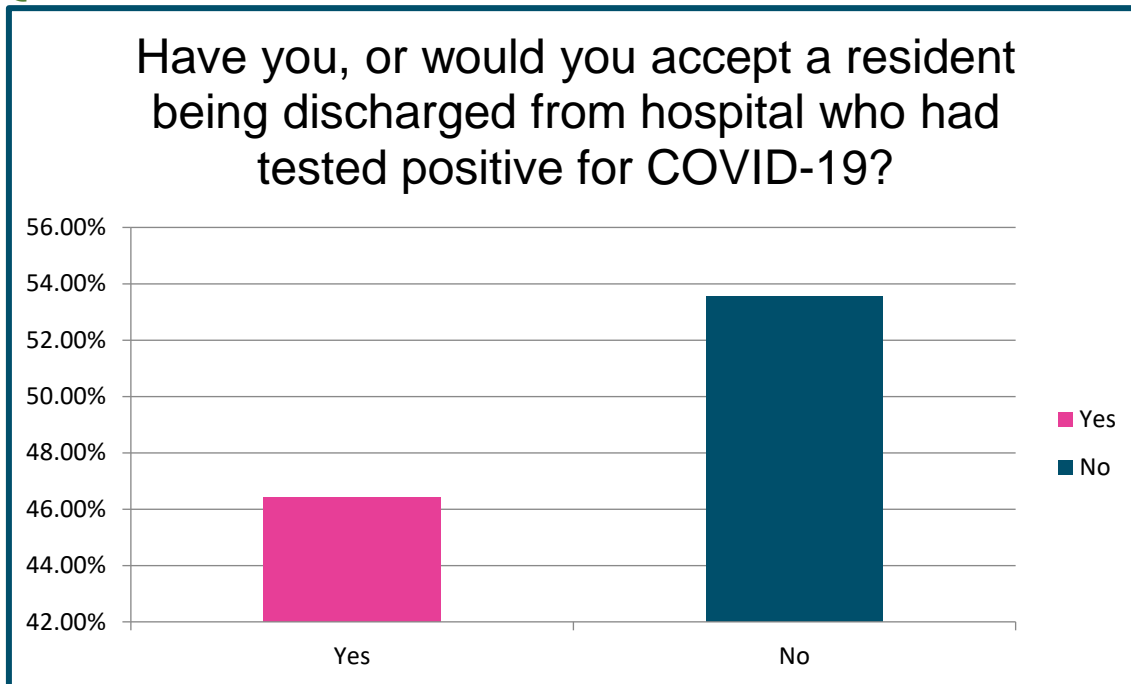
Over half, seven of the 13 care homes who said that there has been a price increase in PPE, said that prices have increased greatly.

Some of the care homes told us about some quite shocking price increases [*these were noted to be private stockists*].

“It’s increased a lot, e.g. a mask pre-Covid was 39p, it’s now £2.50.”

“It has increased by quite some. Ten boxes of gloves would have cost £27/8, now costs £75.”

Question 14



Response:

We received 28 responses to this question:

- 13 (46%) care homes said that they would accept a resident being discharged from hospital who had tested positive for Covid-19
- 15 (54%) care homes said that they would not accept a resident being discharged from hospital who had tested positive for Covid-19

“We would accept residents who have tested positive. Any admittance (at all) would have to go into self-isolation for 14 days.”

“We would [take a discharged patient] but only after a comprehensive assessment and full information from the hospital discharge team.”

“We would not accept someone who had tested positive as [it] would be difficult to manage because of residents’ mental health.”

“We would try to keep a resident with Covid-19 in hospital with their facilities.”

Comment:

Responses to this question were quite varied.

With 15 (54%) of the homes who responded saying they would not accept a resident being discharged from hospital who had tested positive for Covid-19; ten are small care homes.

These homes were either mental health specialist care homes or supported residents with conditions such as mental health issues, learning disabilities or dementia.

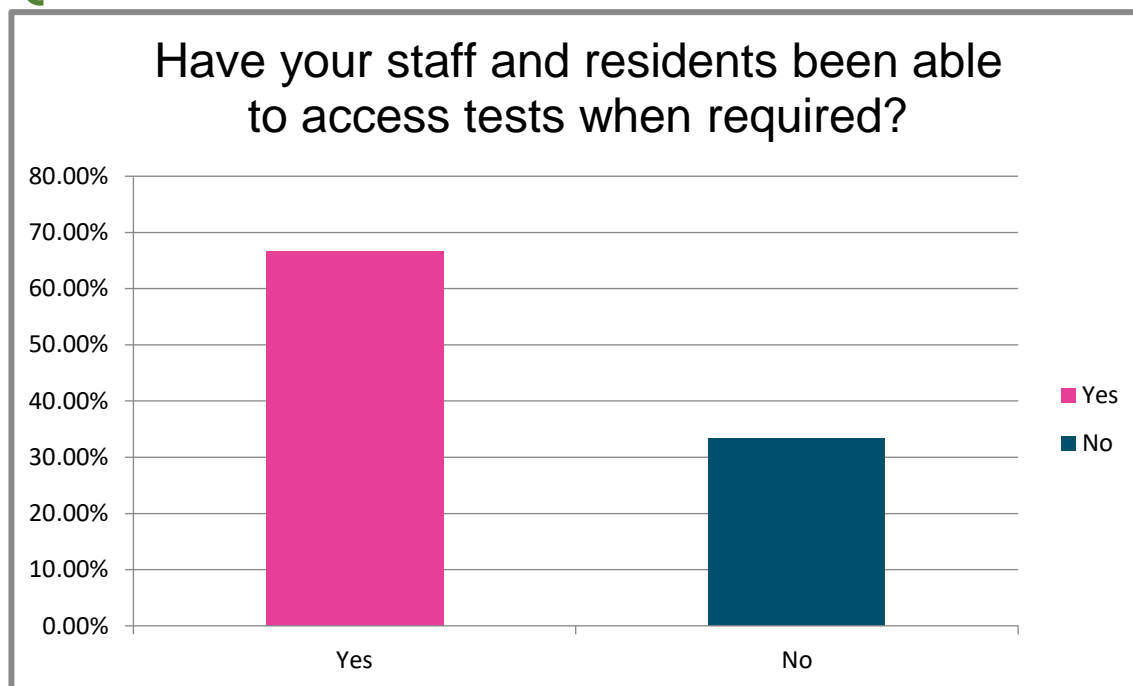
Several homes stated their residents would struggle with social distancing.

Of the care homes who said they would take a resident who had tested positive for Covid-19, most said they would do so by ensuring a stringent risk assessment and isolation protocols were enacted.

One care home said they would only take a resident who tested positive in the past but was not active as they were a small care home.

We did not however, clarify whether care homes were accepting their own residents after a hospital admission, or whether they were accepting new residents after discharge from hospital.

Question 15



Response:

We received 24 responses to this question.

- 16 (67%) care homes said staff and residents had been able to access tests when required
- 8 (33%) care homes said staff and residents had not been able to access tests when required

“[We] would like someone to visit the home to carry out tests on staff and residents.”

“Every day I have to report to Public Health England. Two weeks ago, one of the clinicians asked about testing and was sending out 250 tests. They have not arrived...

...I have raised concerns re: testing with our commissioner from Redbridge (who rings regularly) and they provided a different link. I am waiting to receive tests now.”

One care home told us they were concerned that over 80% of their staff did not drive and could not therefore access the drive-through testing centres. They also said there was difficulty accessing hospital sites. The home told us they were waiting to have tests delivered to the care home so that these members of staff can be tested.

“Since recent changes to testing, the manager has tried on 4 consecutive days to get home testing kits via government website but none are available.”

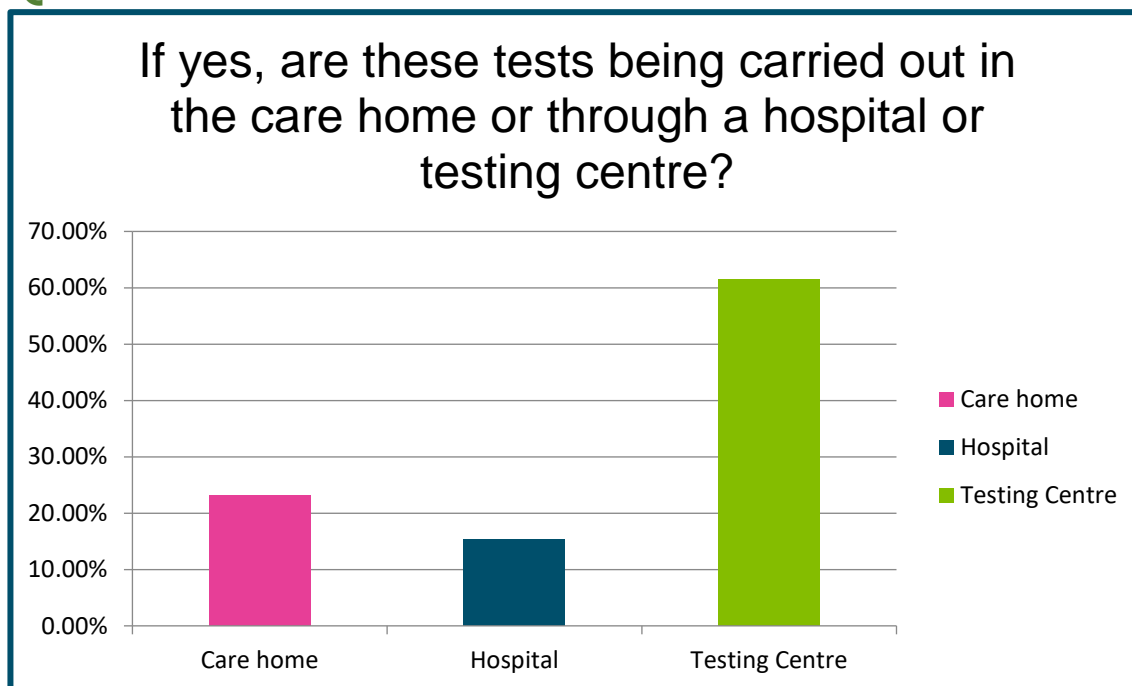
In addition to concerns about access to testing, a further concern was raised about the validity of the tests when one of the care homes told us:

“A big concern is that when tests were done, they came back labelled ‘void’.”

Comment

For some homes it is clear that access to testing has been a real issue. Of those homes, five have had residents who have previously or currently had Covid-19 symptoms, four of those have had residents who have died.

Question 16



Response:

We received 13 (42%) responses to this question:

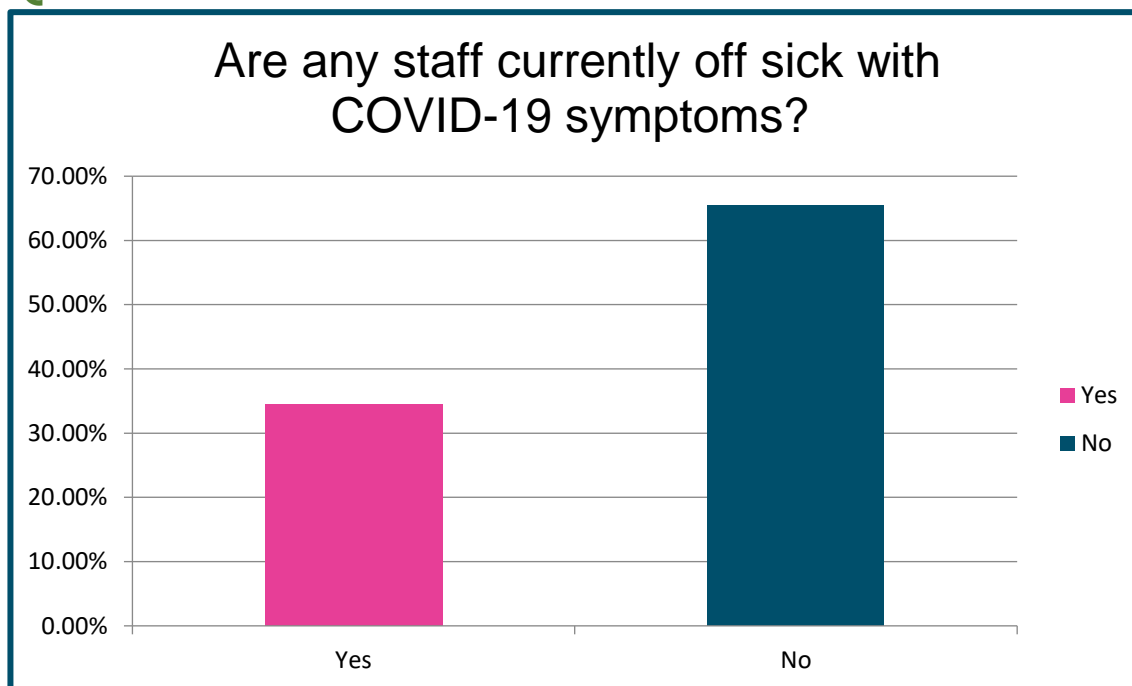
- 3 (23%) care homes told us the tests were being carried out in the care home
- 2 (15%) care homes told us the tests were being carried out in a hospital
- 8 (62%) care homes told us the tests were being carried out in a testing centre

Comment

Most respondents told us that tests were happening at testing centres (Greenwich was mentioned several times), rather than in the care home itself. Staff who were unable to travel, were not getting tested⁵.

⁵ Testing is currently being rolled out across care homes in Redbridge and therefore this information may not be current.

Question 17



Response:

We received 29 (94%) responses to this question:

- 10 (34%) care homes told us they do currently have staff off sick with Covid-19 symptoms
- 19 (66%) care homes told us they do not currently have staff off sick with Covid-19 symptoms

Comment:

Of the ten care homes who told us they currently have staff off sick, nine have residents who have previously or currently had Covid-19 symptoms and four have residents who have died.

Question 18

If so, how many?

Response:

Eight care homes told us they had one or two members of staff off sick. One had five members of staff off sick.

One manager told us that earlier in the pandemic, they had 35 members of staff off sick out of 80. The manager told us they recruited bank staff so that shifts were covered. They have tried to limit the use of agency staff to manage infection control.

Question 19

Do you feel you have enough staff to continue providing your service?

Response:

We received 16 responses to this question, with all stating that they felt they had enough staff to continue providing their service.

Question 20

Are you having to use agency staff?

Response:

The same 16 care homes responded to this question, with only three telling us that they have had to use agency staff. All told us this was only on a temporary basis.

Question 21

Is this more than you would normally use?

Response:

Only one care home responded to this question telling us that this was not more than they would normally use.

Further comments

Two care homes raised concerns about the resident's well-being.

“The residents are emotionally upset they can't see their relatives.”

This care home is ensuring the residents have regular telephone conversations with their families.

Another care home has purchased iPads so that relatives can Skype their relatives.

One care home raised a concern regarding the difficulty of access to online support and one cited an inconsistency in the information being provided by the media as an issue.

Three care homes told us that they have been receiving helpful support from the London Borough of Redbridge.

“We've had lots of support from Redbridge - daily phone calls checking on PPE, signposting, training on testing and infection control.”

“Commissioner from Redbridge has made it a bit easier. Support has been consistent.”

Working with the care homes

Since completing the survey, we have been liaising with some of the care homes who have raised issues around access to PPE.

We have also continued to raise our concerns with health and social care services to ensure the issues raised in this report are addressed.

Where possible we have signposted them to additional support. We have informed the care homes that they can contact us during this pandemic should they need further information or signposting.

Our concerns remain that some care homes are not in the position to effectively isolate some of their residents, particularly given the issues of safety for other residents and the apparent confusion over testing.

We will continue to liaise with the care homes in the borough and plan to review our survey findings in June to gauge whether improvements in testing and support with resident and staff concerns has improved.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Redbridge (HWR) would like to thank the care and nursing staff and managers who contributed to this survey.

We would also like to thank our volunteers without whom we would not have been able to complete the report as quickly as we have.

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