

Arcare Oatlands' COVID Community Zoom Minutes

Thursday 19 August 2021

Arcare Representatives:

- Colin Singh, CEO
- Nghia Bui – State Operations Manager (MC)
- Vanessa Lane – National Manager Clinical Governance, Quality and Compliance
- Carrie Spinks – National Infection Control Specialist

Arcare apologises for the current situation and reassures all families that we are doing our very best to get to the other side of this outbreak as quickly as we can. Our goal is to be as quick and transparent as possible with our communications. We have compiled and consolidated the questions submitted ahead of and during the meeting.

Currently we have:

- o One agency team member who has tested positive
- o All other team members and residents have tested negative
- o 8 close contacts have been furloughed and are isolating at home.

Arcare has learned many lessons from our Victorian responses, which we have implemented at Oatlands. Our National Infection Control Specialist Carrie, and our State Operations Manager Nghia are on site.

Questions	Answers
Day to Day at Oatlands	
1. What does day-to-day look like, especially given there was the gastro outbreak before this one?	<p>Spirits are high, the community is calm and cooperating well. The team are on hand to assist in any way possible across the floor.</p> <p>Residents are provided with regular activities and lifestyle opportunities throughout the day including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Extra technologyo Providing the daily comms on dinner trays. Team members have been communicating with residents to keep them up to dateo One on one with lifestyle team memberso Facetime with loved ones using existing booking processo Exercise in suites with physio attendance <p>If you feel you or your loved one is not accessing these options, please email arcareoatlands2020@outlook.com for booking lifestyle. We want to make sure everyone is benefitting from what is on offer.</p>

<p>2. Is Public Health Unit considering the mental wellbeing of residents during this lockdown given the 3 weeks gastro isolation?</p>	<p>Isolation is required by Public Health Unit for the full 14 day period, however Arcare has strong programs in place to support our residents. These programs were already established during the gastro outbreak and have increased during this time.</p> <p>The Public Health Unit have advised that we can organise remote mental health consults for those residents identified as needing it.</p>
<p>3. What additional support is being offered to dementia residents who do not understand why loved ones are unable to visit them?</p>	<p>We have put in additional risk measures to enable residents living with dementia to continue their usual routines. This means that what they are used to has not changed significantly. They can move about freely within their community isolated from the other community</p> <p>This has been carefully risk assessed, based on the fact that there are currently no positive cases in the area. Full PPE, hand hygiene and additional cleaning protocols are in place to further mitigate risk.</p>
<p>4. Will you allow phone calls through the glass doors or limited visits to rooms when restrictions ease?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, we are not able to consider this given the public health orders in place that limit general movement throughout Greater Sydney. We will update families as soon as this changes.</p>
<p>5. Are residents able to exercise or go outside?</p>	<p>Our residents are currently unable to go outside for exercise. Team members are supporting residents in manageable exercise routines in their suites, and a poster of exercise ideas is in each room for residents to follow. Additional supports are available as needed basis.</p>
<p>Gastro Outbreak:</p>	
<p>6. Why did it take so long to get the original gastro outbreak under control?</p>	<p>Based on the pathology that returned, we were dealing with the Norovirus. The norovirus is very contagious and spreads very quickly within a home amongst clients and staff; despite efforts to minimize by additional infection control measures.</p> <p>The total length of time of an outbreak depends on the case number and when that last case was identified and the last episode of nausea, vomiting or diarrhea occurred.</p>

	<p>Prior to opening we were required to wait until 72 hours post the last case showing symptoms. This ensures the virus is still not circulating in the home with the potential to keep spreading.</p>
<p>COVID-19 Vaccine</p>	
<p>7. What is Arcare's approach to the COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>Arcare has always strongly encouraged the uptake of the vaccine for residents and team members and will cooperate in full with the National Mandate that will require all residential aged care workers to have at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 17 September 2021 in order to continue working.</p> <p>94% of residents and 89% of team members have received either one or both doses of the vaccine. An additional clinic, that was scheduled before the outbreak, went ahead yesterday to capture the remaining residents and team members for their first or second doses as needed.</p> <p>Arcare has introduced personal and team incentives to promote vaccine uptake which has worked well with our teams and has driven our numbers higher across NSW and Nationally.</p> <p>We have also facilitated transport for team members where on-site clinics were unavailable.</p> <p>The remaining few residents who are not vaccinated are having scheduled sessions with their GPs to discuss their options.</p>
<p>8. Will future agency staff be required to be vaccinated?</p>	<p>Agency staff members fall under the mandate from mid-September.</p>
<p>9. Will visitors be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine before entry? 10. Why was flu vaccine mandatory for visitors?</p>	<p>The COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory for all Australians, therefore we cannot force visitors to have the vaccine although we strongly encourage you to consider it, given the risk COVID-19 poses to our community.</p> <p>We also know that the Government and the states have previously mandated the flu vaccine for visitors, therefore there is a chance that will occur for the COVID-19 vaccine once there is more availability.</p>

<p>11. Can a fully vaccinated family member visit once a day (or a few times a week) during isolation on compassionate grounds?</p>	<p>Arcare has asked the Public Health Unit the same question re vaccination. The answer we were given is that with the Delta strain we can't be sure that vaccination is enough.</p> <p>The reasons to visit are in line with the directions from Public Health Unit ie. only on compassionate grounds such as Palliating. Unfortunately, this is outside of Arcare's control.</p>
<p>12. Are you aware of any employed or agency staff who are unwilling to be vaccinated?</p>	<p>We are not aware of this. All team members will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccine by 17 September 2021 (or eligible medical exemption depending on what NSW Public Health Orders) however these have not been released)</p>
<p>13. Are agency staff included in the mandatory vaccine rules coming in next month?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why can't you employ only vaccinated staff? - Is Arcare vaccinating all staff through the government? - Can Arcare make decisions on a duty of care level and make the COVID vaccine mandatory for everyone? 	<p>Yes, agency staff are included in the mandatory vaccination rules. From 17 September we will be allowed to refuse entry to any staff who are not vaccinated and we fully intend to cooperate with this mandate.</p> <p>Arcare has provided both Government funded on-site clinics to team members where available and have also provided incentives and transportation to team members who have accessed the vaccine off site at the various hubs and locations.</p> <p>We have utilized all available opportunities to provide the vaccination to staff which has resulted in over 70% team members in NSW receiving at least the first dose of the vaccine and more booked in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Arcare is strongly encouraging families and visitors to have the COVID-19 vaccine as this is our <u>best line of defense</u>.</p>
<p>Infection Control Measures and Arcare's response</p>	
<p>14. What measures are in place to ensure that the risk that another employee with COVID enters with workplace remains low?</p>	<p>Arcare's measures include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Frequency of testing – in an initial outbreak it's daily testing for 7 days. After that it's every 72-hours and again on day 12/13. o Everyone on site is wearing PPE, masks, gowns, gloves, and shields. o Our Quality teams "spotting" (overseeing) the wearing of PPE to ensure the level is safe. o We go through a PPE competency to ensure that they understand PPE and hand hygiene. o Work units – we make sure no team member that has previously worked in one area moves to another. We are also constantly scrutinizing where teams work and ensure they don't overlap zones.

<p>15. What measures are in place to limit the contact between unvaccinated staff and the residents?</p>	<p>Personal protective equipment and infection control processes, including the introduction of infection control before the Government required it.</p> <p>Moving forward, in high-risk transmission areas, any team members that attend other residences/homes (i.e. agency, contractors) are required to wear PPE when attending Arcare.</p>
<p>16. What is the risk of virus infection when staff are mobilised from one section to another section in one shift?</p>	<p>Since the start of the outbreak, Arcare Oatlands have cohorted our team to 4 designated units and team members do not cross over from to the other.</p> <p>This means that a team member is assigned to one unit for all their shifts- they do not move units from shift to shift.</p> <p>Prior to the outbreak this was in place to a lesser extent, however night duty staff do move more across the residence than day staff due to the limited interaction with residents (sleeping etc).</p>
<p>17. Will you implement rapid testing for team members before each shift at Arcare?</p>	<p>No not at this stage. We need full COVID-19 PCR to ensure we have accurate results as the rapid antigen tests only register a positive in a small window of a person's infectious period.</p> <p>Team members across Arcare NSW are undergoing 72-hour testing if they live in the LGAs of concern, while team members on site have been tested every day since outbreak.</p>
<p>18. How often is testing occurring at Arcare Oatlands?</p>	<p>Testing is daily for the first 7 days of the outbreak for <u>residents and team members</u>. Will move to every 72 hours and then again on day 12/13 for team members.</p>
<p>19. What date in August will be considered day 14? If no cases during this time, will communal dining and activities resume on day 15?</p>	<p>Currently, 14 days from the last positive test will be the 27th August, as the team member was onsite on the 13th August.</p> <p>If someone tests positive, the 14-day outbreak period resets. We will know if COVID-19 has not passed to any team members or residents after the 14 day period of no new cases.</p> <p>Under guidance of Public Health, once outbreak declared over we would resume normal activities (in line with the current NSW restrictions).</p>

<p>20. What is your plan to opening Arcare to visitors again?</p>	<p>We are reliant upon the guidance of the Public Health Unit.</p>
<p>21. How has Arcare management managed the outbreak?</p>	<p>Arcare implemented a robust response to the outbreak, building on learnings from Victoria this year and last.</p> <p>We are working closely with the Department of Health and are in regular contact throughout the day. This includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Twice daily meetings with the Public Health Unit during the week and daily over the weekends o followed by additional phone contact. <p>We host a daily crisis meeting with key Arcare stakeholders including department heads and the executive team to ensure everyone is on the same page and that we are providing all necessary support to Oatlands, our team and our residents.</p> <p>Onsite a daily Residence outbreak meeting is held with presentation from all areas of the home – catering, cleaning, laundry, management, care, maintenance, administration.</p>
<p>22. Infection Control procedures in place?</p>	<p>Under the guidance of Arcare’s Infection Control Specialist, Arcare has implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A clear process of moving laundry through the residence to ensure that soiled clothes are cleaned safely and returned to residents with strict infection control precautions. o Catering – we looked at every angle to ensure the delivery of food, how it gets to the main kitchen, how its plated and covered, how its kept warm, are the dishes porous, how drinks are prepared, how its disseminated etc are all in line with infection control risk prevention and minimisation. o Clear zoning and pathways to ensure that there is no cross over between care teams and others (e.g. environmental, admin and catering), and to ensure care and clinical staff do not leave their designated zones including 4 additional tea rooms set up outside. o Personal Protective equipment and hand hygiene is maintained by all staff, education and competencies are provided to all new/contractor staff onsite, Quality Team nurses oversee the processes on the floor and monitor correct practice and provide additional support.
<p>23. Can you confirm what is happening with the meals?</p>	<p>Meals are being delivered to rooms and single serve portions are utilized. We have our Regional Catering Manager, Paul, on site to support the team.</p>

	Heat retaining covers are placed above and below each cooked dish to ensure it remains warm. All plated dishes / drinks (including wine) are covered, and all are individually prepared and wrapped in the kitchen and delivered to the suites.
<p>24. What unit was the COVID positive agency nurse working in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why was the affected nurse working in all units? - If you know which staff need to isolate, please advise which residents the COVID positive agency nurse cared for? 	<p>The agency nurse was on night duty. Due to lighter duties and minimal interaction with residents (undertaken with face masks, face shields, and hand hygiene), night duty staff work across broader areas of the residence. Therefore only 8 other team members were isolated as close contacts due to limited interaction. This is a risk assessed process that is mitigated using PPE.</p> <p><u>All residents are considered at potential risk due to possible asymptomatic spread.</u> This is of course a more cautious approach and one that has proven beneficial in previous outbreaks. As most residents were sleeping, there was limited interaction.</p>
Staffing At Arcare Oatlands	
25. What is Arcare doing about single-site working?	Arcare NSW team members are following the current Government directions and are working at a nominated single-site.
26. How is Arcare supporting team members who are isolating?	<p>We are providing isolating team members with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Full pay so that they are not required to use leave and are not financially disadvantaged o Personal phone calls to check on their wellbeing o Free counselling service to all team members <p>Isolating team members will not return to work until they are cleared by the Department to do so.</p>
27. Do you have enough team members at Arcare Oatlands? Is it fully staffed?	We have adequate staffing levels for the outbreak and we continue to work with local authorities to ensure that any gaps can be filled should the need arise. We have also pulled team members from NSW Arcare resources such as our Quality Team who are onsite to ensure PPE usage and hand hygiene etc are being done correctly.
28. Will weekend staffing increase during lockdown?	Yes, they are. We have additional lifestyle, catering, and cleaning team members on site. We also have additional support from Quality and HR to assist with management of the outbreak.

29. When will isolating team members return?	Isolating team members will return when they have clearance from Department of Health to do so.
30. How are we dealing with changing team members and continuity of care?	<p>Since the start of the outbreak, team members are being rostered to one zone only – there is no crossing between zones by any team members. This includes the construction of 4 tea rooms for team members use in each zone. This reduces the possibility of mingling to zero.</p> <p>Teams are being rostered into consecutive shifts where it is possible to help build rapport and relationships with residents.</p> <p>Arcare Oatlands have handovers every morning, and the daily resident outbreak management team meeting to ensure we are across all details.</p>
31. Does Arcare Oatlands have a casual staff register of carers who are familiar with and only work at this residence?	The Single-Site mandate has made it challenging, but we are doing our best to give extra shifts to team members where possible.
32. What proportion of care staff shifts are filled with agency staff who are allowed to move from facility to facility?	<p>Unfortunately, we cannot give a figure as this changes daily depending on roster requirements.</p> <p>We cover shifts with our own team as much as possible, including additional supports from our Quality team etc.</p> <p>We are cohorting agency staff to ensure they don't cross over zones. We are increasing testing across all our NSW sites for care workers.</p>
33. To what extent has the lockdown and COVID outbreak affected or reduced normal staffing levels?	<p>Single-site working has affected aged care workforces across the state as most aged care staff work across multiple residences or providers.</p> <p>Therefore, this has affected staffing however we are confident that we are able to provide the appropriate care and support for residents.</p>
34. What is being done to resolve staffing issues so that our loved ones are safe and well cared for?	<p>Unfortunately, staffing is an issue for all aged care providers with so many isolating due to COVID and/ or being required to work at a single site.</p> <p>As previously mentioned, we are seeking the same agency staff to work in the same area each time to build familiarity.</p>

Other Questions	
35. Is there a GP that is visiting?	We have been advised where possible the GP consults should be via telehealth. We do have GP's from the Public Health Unit who will attend on site when needed.
36. When will the delivery packages including laundry for residents' resume?	Unfortunately, due to infection control risk we are not accepting packages at this stage. We will advise when this changes.
37. Is there a discount during lockdown on Signature Service fees?	Yes, there is a 25% reduction in signature service for the duration of the outbreak which will be applied to the next invoice.

If you have any further questions, please email COVID.Oatlands@arcare.com.au.