

Covid Crisis Special Report 6

Testing Company Culture

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The following concerns were raised by 23 staff members all from separate care homes.

All 23 cases are existing helpline cases that had contacted this helpline at the start of the Covid Crisis on other issues.

The Covid testing issue has emerged in the last three weeks commencing 5th May 2020 to current date and it's an issue that reflects a culture within a care company of protecting reputation whatever the cost.

All 23 staff have discovered that the test results of residents who have tested Covid 19 positive have not been disclosed to staff or to the families of the residents.

The following two cases are typical of all 23.

Voices From The Front Line.

“On the whole the home has had only XX cases and contained the virus spreading. I came in to work and we had a handover. I was doing my usual duty's and one of the seniors who had just gone off shift came towards me and took me aside, I don't know what to do but XX has tested positive for Covid 19, we have been told not to say anything to the other staff but I cannot do it. Please don't say I told you, but they don't want anyone being told, not the staff or family's as it makes the home look bad to have another case. I felt sick they had done this, to not tell us how could they be so stupid. What about us we are only allowed proper PPE if we are attending to someone who might have the virus.”

All I could think of was How many times have we been in there, when did I go into XX room and who did I come into contact with after that, I had to tell the other staff I did not want to get the other person in trouble so did not mention them, I said XX was coughing, How could they be so stupid?"

"I was working on the unit it was late in the shift, one of the staff from another unit was on break with me and they mentioned that a resident on my unit xx has tested Covid positive, I was really shocked as we had not been told. I went straight to the senior and said is this true we have all been in contact with XX I was feeding XX earlier. The senior said it was true, but we should play it down as it would make us look sloppy and upset all the families, That it was ok as XX did not seem to have any symptoms. But that does not mean xx can't pass it on I said, we are all at risk now the staff and residents. Every time I go in, I say I want full PPE and am told we can only have it if people have tested positive, but how can you trust them, all that banging on about having tests and what do they do when its flagged up"

In all 23 cases staff discovered that residents had tested Covid positive by pure chance as in all cases the positive test was perceived by management to reflect badly on the home in some way.

Whilst I have seen the protection of reputation play a detrimental part in whistleblowing generally, I have never encountered such a serious risk of imminent and obvious harm being involved to so many other people as in these cases.

I have to admit that when the first case came in, I found it incredible that this could happen, of course as more cases came in it became apparent there were clear patterns emerging, Protection of reputation, a pride in having no new cases and chronic complacency.

It also raises questions as to how widespread this issue is overall. It is vital this issue is highlighted and urgent action taken to avoid more avoidable deaths.

Compassion In Care