Delivering Core NHS and Care Services during the Pandemic and Beyond

Sue Ryder supplementary evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee

8 July 2020
Supplementary evidence

Meeting the wave of pent-up demand for health and care services that have been delayed due to the coronavirus outbreak

- Our most recent research has revealed concerning findings regarding potentially serious symptoms going unchecked during lockdown. One third (34%) of people polled said that they had ignored potentially serious symptoms by up to 2 months. Among those who had delayed seeking medical advice or treatment, or know someone who has, 2 out of 5 (41%) still had not sought medical treatment (as of 3-4 June 2020).

- The symptoms most likely to have been ignored include: new and continuous pain anywhere in their body (7%), severe tiredness (7%), a rash or skin issue (6%), migraines (5%), and shortness of breath (5%). These can be symptoms of serious illnesses including cancer.

- 62% of people said that if they did experience symptoms during lockdown, they would feel they were putting unnecessary pressure on the NHS or would risk catching coronavirus if they were to seek medical treatment.

- With thousands of NHS treatments for life-threatening conditions postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19, such delays in diagnosis and accessing treatment may further reduce chances of survival.

- Coupled with the fact that there is a growing preference amongst the public to receive end of life care in a hospice or at home, it is clear that the palliative care sector should expect an increase in the numbers of patients needing our care.

- Over half of the public (54%) would want to receive end of life care at home, and almost one quarter (23%) would choose a hospice setting. Even in their last few days, only 3% of the public would want to receive end of life care in a hospital.

- Sue Ryder runs hospices and hospice at home services across England. The charity is concerned that without a sustainable funding model for hospices, the predicted increase in need could quickly become overwhelming for the palliative care sector as a whole.

- The review of the Ambitions for Palliative and End of Life Care later this year, is a welcome opportunity for the Government to review progress against its commitment to prioritise and improve end of life care. The Government must start planning now to increase long-term statutory funding and transform the model of commissioning in order to relieve the pressures facing palliative care services across the country.

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1 All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2067 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken 3-4 June 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).