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# Successful Brent care schemes during the COVID-19 Pandemic

**May 2021**

A Brief Analysis of Good Practice and Adaptations, in Selected Care Schemes in Brent, in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: revisited after 12 months.



# Document

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## Content

Document control	2
Content	2
Introduction	4
Findings	5
Conclusion	10





## Care Schemes in Brent successes during COVID-19 Pandemic

### Review focus

- Level of COVID-19 deaths
- Support received from Brent Council
- Availability of Personal Protective Equipment
- Staffing levels
- Management Procedures
- Residents

### Findings

#### Visram House

- Early visiting restrictions
- Clear hospital discharge policy
- Excellent training
- High vaccination rate

#### Willesden Lane

- Residents helped to attend appointments
- Effective management
- Excellent training
- High vaccination rate

#### Arran Court

- Effective cleaners
- Excellent training
- High vaccination rate

#### Avonhurst House

- Good staff retention
- Excellent training
- High Vaccination rate

0  
Deaths

“PPE support from Brent Council was exceptionally good”

Early adopters of Testing

“Pretend you have covid it makes you take extra care”

1  
Covid-19 case

### Common themes for success

- Highly supportive managers - for residents and staff
- Excellent understanding of the residents
- Good staff training practices
- Excellent communications
- Managers go above and beyond for their residents

# Introduction

Brent's diverse population has access to a large number of care homes. The borough has a high proportion of care facilities compared with other boroughs.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the borough of Brent earlier than some other boroughs. Due to the restrictions on Enter and View visits during the pandemic, a brief survey of selected care schemes was conducted in April 2020, and we contacted them again in April 2021. The aim was to gather feedback from scheme managers on how they were coping with the pandemic, which posed unprecedented challenges because of the early and rapid spread of the virus.

Healthwatch Brent gathered views from selected care schemes in Brent, each of which had been previously visited by the Enter and View Team. The schemes were selected based on their previous Enter and View report in which each scheme had demonstrated excellent quality of service and management. This time contact was made by telephone, with the specific aim of gathering feedback on how each scheme had coped 12 months after the initial contact at the beginning of the pandemic.

**We discovered that the selected schemes had very low or zero fatalities due to the COVID-19 virus and we were keen to understand why.**

The participating schemes were:

- **Visram House** - Supported Living Capacity 99 room - Manager Dr Mushrik Hameed
- **Willesden Lane CMG** - Supported Living Capacity 3 rooms - Manager Jennie Limburg
- **Arran Court** - (Network Homes) Capacity 31 flats - Manager Deborah Whyte
- **Avonhurst House** - (Network Homes) Capacity 40 flats - Manager Esther Noah

Each Scheme was asked to give feedback on any issues they faced during the last 12 months. We were particularly interested to hear about the following:

- The level of COVID-19 deaths
- Support they received from Brent Council
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Staffing levels
- Management Procedures
- Residents' experience

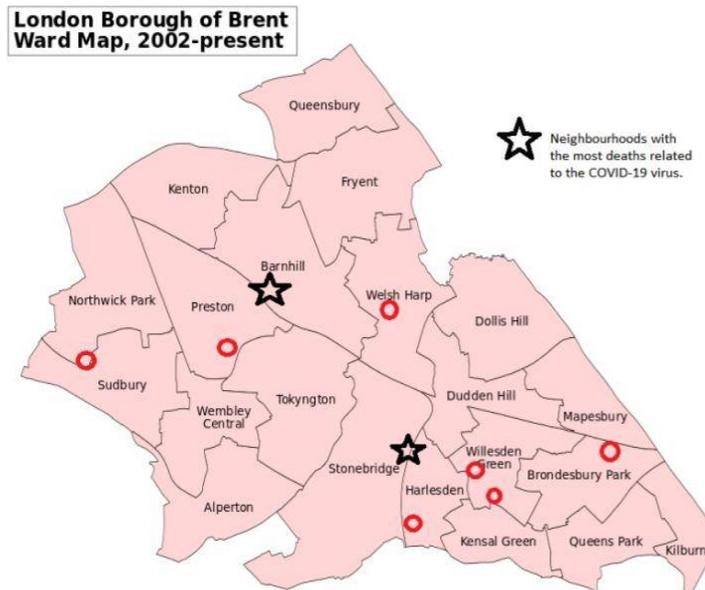
Each care scheme was invited to give brief feedback in their own words and were then asked specific questions.

## Care schemes visited in 2018/19

### Participating care schemes

- Visram House
- Willesden Lane CMG
- Arran Court
- Avonhurst House
- Rosemary House
- Tulsi House
- Willow House

Location of care schemes previously visited by Enter & View Team 2018-19



## Findings



### Visram House

250 Acton Lane, NW10 7NS (Notting Hill Genesis)

Manager: Dr Mushrik Hammeed

### Background

The scheme consists of 84 one bedroom and 15 two-bedroom apartments, within a purpose-built Extra Care Scheme in the heart of Park Royal, North London. The scheme is designed for independent living in a communal setting. It has level access wet rooms, secure entry systems, intercom giving 24-hour access to staff and lift access to all floors.

This supported living scheme has a capacity of 99 beds. During the period under review, it was at approximately 75% capacity. The manager, Dr Mushrik Hameed, was interviewed last year, and a follow-up interview was conducted in April 2021.

## Feedback

Healthwatch Brent was interested in looking at the key areas of effective management that had contributed to the fact that there were no deaths from COVID-19 at the scheme. Important themes were infection control, training models, communications and staff management.

The scheme has excellent infection control procedures. This included hygiene training for all staff, the plentiful supplies of PPE and lateral flow tests (LFT). The scheme stated that PPE support from Brent Council was exceptionally good.

Half-day training sessions provided by the local authority were given to the staff via zoom. Dr Hammeed told us that “the nurse taught staff how to look for symptoms and what appropriate action should be taken. Internal training was also provided at the scheme.”

The manager made the decision early on not to accept any COVID-19 positive individuals from hospital, meaning that a clear hospital discharge policy was in place at the beginning of the pandemic.

Staff were trained by a nurse how to perform COVID-19 tests. These were then done on a weekly basis. The regular testing of staff made a considerable impact on preventing the transmission of the virus. Temperature checks were also started early on during the pandemic.

New procedures were put in place when considering new residents. Potential residents were offered a consultation via zoom. New internal training was given on dealing with aspects of the moving-in process. For example, removal personnel were not allowed to use the elevator.

The scheme implemented new bubble procedures for families, with an appointments system put in place. Two people were allowed come to the terrace garden, which helped reduce social isolation.

Dr Hammeed told Healthwatch Brent that the families and relatives were initially upset with not being able to see their family member, but that “they now thank us for keeping them safe.”



### Arran Court

Press Road, Wembley, HA9 ONU (Network Homes)

Manager: Deborah Whyte

## Background

Arran Court was built in 1989. It has 11 one and two bedroom flats with an allocated Manager and Mobile Warden available on site. The facilities at Arran Court include a lift, a lounge, dining room, guest facilities and a garden. Currently Arran Court has 31 tenants. The service is tailored to residents' needs and care is provided by external agencies under contract with the local authority. The facility has non-resident management staff and a Careline alarm service. The manager visits the scheme twice a week, and a mobile warden is also available.

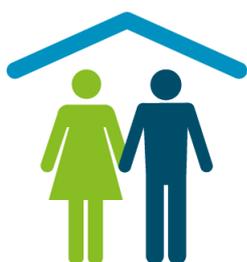
## Feedback

The scheme manager, Deborah Whyte, was interviewed and asked a series of questions to evaluate the procedures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There were no COVID-19 specific deaths at the scheme. One resident had passed away, but this was not due to the virus.

Ms Whyte was asked why the scheme had such a low rate of infection compared to other schemes. A variety of points were mentioned. The vaccination rate at the scheme was high.

Residents were helped with the text messages they received inviting them to their appointments and with attending those appointments. Carers were trained thoroughly in infection control and the use of PPE.

The positive relationship between care staff and the management is also a factor. Open communication is encouraged. Staff understand they should take time off if they are unwell and are supported in doing so. The manager stated she didn't want staff to "burn out."



## Avonhurst House

Coverdale Road, Willesden, London, NW2 4DF  
(Network Homes)

Manager: Esther Noah

## Background

Avonhurst House is a sheltered housing scheme in Willesden that supports older people to maintain their independence and encouraging them to live as a community. It comprises 40 self-contained one bedroom flats with an allocated Scheme Manager and Mobile Warden available on site. The scheme has a variety of communal facilities including lounges, dining rooms and a garden.

The main goal of sheltered housing is to provide support for residents, especially in the rehabilitation process, preventing unnecessary admissions to hospital or mental health

services. Sheltered housing differs from conventional housing by providing residents with a range of support services such as a Mobile Warden Wardens and Scheme Manger.

## Feedback

The scheme manager, Esther Noah, was interviewed in April 2021, with the aim of understanding how staff and residents have coped with the pandemic since last year. The manager informed Healthwatch Brent that the residents had coped very well with the pandemic. The vaccination process had been successful, with only two residents refusing the vaccine. There have been no deaths due to COVID-19.

The relationship between the residents and the scheme manger is particularly good, with Ms Noah carrying out a range of services over and above her job description. She told Healthwatch Brent how she helped them fill in the paper census, while social distancing. “I got a chance to ask them questions and to know them better. Some have never been to school. I help them check their rent statements because the Income Officer cannot come every week. I help them avoid arrears.” If residents have problems reading and writing and have vision impairment, the manager reads the newsletter to them and makes sure everyone is no one is left out.

Brent Council provided plentiful PPE and hand sanitiser throughout the crisis. The cleaners at the scheme were particularly thorough and their diligence helped prevent the spread of the virus.

The manager said, “the best way to prevent the spread of the virus is to pretend you have Covid. This makes you take extra care and attention. When any of the residents inform me that they have had the vaccine, I make a careful note of it.”



167 Willesden Lane NW6 7Y - CMG (Care Management Group)

Manager: Jennie Limburg

## Background

Willessden Lane is a specialist supported living service for adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities, communication and sensory impairments and complex health needs, including epilepsy. Supported living enables people to live independently in the community, promoting well-being and alleviating social isolation. It consists of five ground floor flatlets, each with its own bathroom or wet room facilities and patio access. All facilities are fully accessible.

The scheme is noted for its ethos of not defining residents by their health conditions but treating them as individuals. It helps tenants develop their own care plans to give them as much independence, choice and control in their lives as possible.

## Feedback

The manager, Jennie Limburg, was praised in the Summary Report of Enter & View 2019 in which the project officer and authorised representatives stated that, “The Manager, Jennie Limburg, should be recognised for her exceptionally high standards.” Reasons for this positive feedback include her skill and sensitivity in non-verbal communication with residents as well as her strong and caring relationship with her staff. In addition to managing the Willesden Lane scheme, the manager is also currently managing another supported living scheme.

The manager was contacted in April 2021, to find out how the scheme had coped over the past 12 months. It was a challenging environment because of the severe and complex health issues faced by the residents.

There were no deaths in 2020 in the scheme and when an infection did occur in early 2021, it was contained and did not spread. In this case, a resident became unwell in January. He was fed through a nasogastric tube and did not show any signs of COVID-19. All the other residents were in good health. After examining the resident, the nurse concluded he had an infection. The nurse also noted low blood oxygen levels. The resident was admitted to hospital around 3am, and by 11 am in the morning, Track and Trace contacted the scheme and then informed them that he had tested positive for COVID-19. The manager arranged tests through the local GP for all staff and residents. One staff member tested positive but was asymptomatic. The correct procedures were followed, and the staff member was instructed to self-isolate.

At this time, the scheme was provided with its own test kits for staff and residents. A PCR test is carried out each week and sent for analysis at a laboratory. Lateral flow tests are taken twice a week, with immediate results.

Staff retention has been good during the pandemic, with all staff remaining in their jobs. This has ensured consistency of care from a well-trained, committed workforce.

## Conclusion

Effective control of the virus in the schemes under review has contributed to zero or exceptionally low fatality rates. Each of these schemes have managers who provide a high level of support to the residents and staff. They have an excellent understanding of the needs of their residents. Staff training and plentiful PPE appear to have contributed to the success of these schemes in managing to protect residents from COVID-19, as has testing once this became widely available.

The managers of these schemes all have one thing in common; they state they go above and beyond their official remit. This dedication has almost certainly contributed to the low or zero rates of infection during the pandemic.

Healthwatch Brent encourages the sharing of good practices highlighted in this report to help reduce COVID-19 infection among residents and staff in care homes during any further outbreaks of the virus.

