

## Dismal failure in care home coronavirus testing has turned our most vulnerable into sitting ducks, writes former Pensions Minister BARONESS ROS ALTMANN

- The coronavirus pandemic is ravaging care homes all over the world
- The nation and its politicians are neglecting the needs of the elderly
- In April, Matt Hancock promised tests for all care home staff and residents
- Yet so many who need testing have still not received one, causing tragic results
- [Here's how to help people impacted by Covid-19](#)

By [BARONESS ALTMANN FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)

**PUBLISHED:** 23:24, 10 May 2020 | **UPDATED:** 08:11, 11 May 2020

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The crisis we are living through has shown the very best of Britain: from the selfless commitment of frontline **NHS** and social care staff to the 750,000 who came forward as volunteers.

But the pandemic has also shone a cruel spotlight on one of our greatest failings: our attitude towards the elderly.

As the Mail revealed on Saturday, there is growing evidence that some hospitals, in a desperate race to clear beds before **coronavirus** cases surged, are sending patients suffering from Covid-19 back to care homes without telling their managers.





## **The coronavirus pandemic is shining a cruel light on this country's greatest failings - our attitude towards the elderly**

Now Covid-19 is ravaging care homes nationwide. Those who are most vulnerable have become, in effect, sitting ducks, while scientists fear these institutions are now 'seeding' the infection back into the community.

Since the Mail began powerfully exposing this crisis, politicians have lined up to express horror at the mounting Covid-19 death toll of care home residents. In the Commons last week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he 'bitterly regrets' what is unfolding.

But it is politicians who are primarily responsible. Years of dithering, indifference, under-funding and trepidation means social care in Britain does not reflect – and instead neglects – the needs of an ageing population.

Policy experts and campaigners like myself have argued for years that this would result in tragedy but official attitude seemed to be 'out of sight, out of mind'.

Suddenly, these warnings have become a dark reality. Until April 29, Covid-19-related fatalities in care homes were not even included in the Government's daily death toll and the initial exclusion of these figures was symptomatic of shocking abandonment. The latest figures reveal there have been about 6,000 coronavirus-related care home deaths and that number is rising.

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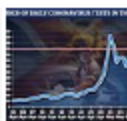


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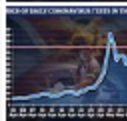
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## **Britain is neglecting the needs of an ageing population - and it's the politicians who are responsible for this**

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I have heard heartbreaking stories of older people who would normally have been admitted to hospital being left to suffer at home or in their care home.

In one appalling case, an elderly woman was taken to hospital with a broken shoulder and sent swiftly back to her care home after it was strapped up.

She was badly dehydrated and urgently needed to be put on a drip, but the hospital